

THE
Character and Trial
OF A
REAL CHRISTIAN;
Exemplify'd in the LIFE and Ex-
PERIENCE of Mr. HENRY
GEARING, late Citizen of
LONDON.

By JOHN SHOWER,

The Third EDITION;

I think this is the fourth Edition.

With a PREFACE by Samuel Hayward:

LONDON:

Printed and Sold by JOHN ROBINSON at the
Globe and Bible at Dock-Head, Southwark;
and Thomas Field, at the Wheat Sheaf,
the Corner of Pater-noster Row, 1754.



The PREFACE.

THere's so much Infidelity and Profaneness in the present Age, so much Coldness and Indifferency on the one Hand, and Unbelief on the other, amongst professing Christians, that we have need of every Argument that can be brought to convince us of the Truth and Excellency of Christianity, every Motive to stir us up to a diligent Practice of it, and every Encouragement to enliven and animate us in our Christian Race, that we faint not in our Way, or droop between the Difficulties we meet with in the World. Many Attempts have been made from Time to Time, in Private and in Public, from the Pulpit and from the Press, to enlighten the Understanding, convince and establish the Judgment, raise the Affections, and impress the Mind with a strong and lively Sense of the important Concerns of Immortality, as well as to cheer the dejected Christian, scatter his Fears, encourage his Hopes, and support his Soul amidst all the thorny Mazes of a difficult Wilderness. And yet what Ignorance of the great and most interesting Affairs of Salvation; what Contempt of sacred Things; what Contentment and Security in a State of the most dangerous and awful; what Hypocrisy and Partiality amongst the Professors of Religion; and what Negligence amongst some, and Unbelief amongst others of the real Followers of Jesus! But however fruitless such Attempts have been; yet this should not discourage us in a Matter of so great Concern, but rather quicken our Zeal and stir us up to use our utmost Endeavours to convince the Unbeliever of the

A 2

Reality

Reality of Religion, to rouse the sleepy Professor, and engage him to a more diligent Practice of it, and to animate all with a proper and suitable Concern for it. Among the many Methods, I know of none more proper and affecting than presenting the World with the Lives of those who were eminent for Holiness, for this has a direct and strong Tendency to convince and awaken on the one Hand, and to encourage and strengthen on the other; as they are lively Evidences of the Truth of Religion, and glorious Confirmations of the Excellency of those Doctrines, which are the too general Subjects of Ridicule and Contempt.

Mr. *Henry Gearing* (who has a principal Concern in the following Sheets) was one of those who lived the Truths of Religion as well as believed them. And though he appeared at some Distance of Time from us; yet the republishing that Account of Him, which Mr. *Shower* favoured the World with in 1694, may be necessary in the present Day of Darkness and Degeneracy, to shew us the Difference between the Spirit of the present Professors of Christianity and that of our Fathers, who are gone to Glory: to fill us with Shame and Humiliation, as well as alarm us, at a View of the declining State of Religion amongst us, and to stir us up to a greater Diligence in the Discharge of the important Duties of it; in the Closet, in the Family, in the Church, and in the World; that Infidels may not open their Mouths against the great Truths of Christianity, but be convinced of their Reality and Importance, by viewing the Influence they have upon the Tempers and

Con-

Conversation of those who with Zeal contend for them. Mr. *Gearing* adorn'd the Doctrines he profess'd, by an uncommon Uprightness in his Dealings, by a Temper the most humane, benevolent and christian, full of Concern for God, and Love to the Souls of his Fellow-creatures, and by an uniform and constant Attention to the great Duties incumbent on the Christian in the various Stations and Relations he pass'd thro' in Life. He made therefore a shining Figure in the Family and in the Church, and exceeded many of his Fellow-christians in real vital Godliness. How happy would it be if Parents and Heads of Families did imitate this good Man, and pray with and for their Children and Servants, discover the same tender Concern for the Souls of those under their Care, and endeavour to instruct them in the great and essential Principles and Branches of Christianity. But how many are negligent here! We go to public Worship, hear the Word of God, and when that is over, we think we have done all that is required of us; and the remaining Moments of that sacred Day, instead of being devoted to the Service of the Family and Closet, are either spent in unprofitable Visits, unsuitable Conversation, or in a manner that shows we have but little Concern for our own Souls or the Souls of others. This is the fashionable Religion of the Day. We appear as Christians in the House of God, but we are Heathens at Home, where the Souls of our dear Children and Servants, which God has committed to our Care and Charge, are starving and perishing for Lack of Knowledge. Certainly every Per-

son who has a real Concern for the Interest of his Redeemer, as well as for the Welfare of this Nation, cannot but drop a Tear, to see how the Lord's Day is profaned by many, and how little it is observed even by those who call themselves Christians, and with what Readiness and Pleasure that Time that can be gained from attending the necessary Affairs of the Week, is spent in Luxery and Intemperance, or in Plays, Assemblies, and other fashionable Diversions; which (I appeal to all that frequent them) tend to corrupt the Mind, alienate the Affections from God, encrease our Taste for Pleasure, and destroy the very Vitals of Religion. Oh thoughtless Creatures! Could I consistently indulge my Inclination, how affectionately would I intreat you? What Arguments are they which I would not make Use of with you, to stir you up seriously to consider the Worth of your immortal Soul, the Shortness and Uncertainty of Time, the Awfulness of dying, and the Solemnity of appearing before God, when a Sentence will be passed upon you, assigning your everlasting Condition; either in the Mansions of Glory, or in the dark Regions of the bottomless Pit, beyond the Reach of Mercy, and the Hopes of Salvation? But I must not enlarge, though the Subjects be so full of Importance. However I cannot forbear heartily praying, that all those into whose Hands this little Book may fall, may carefully read it, and that the Spirit of God may fasten the deepest Convictions upon their Minds, in reading, concerning the Truth and Excellency of Religion, and consequently of the Superior Happiness of the real Christian,

both

both living and dying, and be persuaded to follow the Example of that good Man, they will read of, in whatever Character, Relation, or Circumstance, he manifested the Beauty and Power of Godliness.

As Mr. *Gearing* was so eminent a Christian, so frequent in his Closet, and so much concerned to know the State of his Soul; he collected from various Authors a Variety of Marks and Evidences of the real Christian, to guide him in the Duty of Examination, in which he appears to have spent much Time. These Evidences we have represented in this Book for the Help of others, who are willing to know whether they are Christians indeed, and how the Work of Religion is carried on in their Souls, and therefore frequently set apart some Time to make the important Enquiry. This Duty of Examination appears to be evidently grounded upon Scripture, is what our Fathers frequently attended to, and is a great Means in the Hands of the Spirit, of scattering the Fears of the timorous Christian, leading him to some sweet Communion with God, strengthening his Resolutions in his Way to Heaven, making Religion thrive and flourish in his Soul, and of clearing up a Point, which of all others is the most important, and that is, whether we have experienced the Power of renewing Grace, or are but almost Christians. How happy would it be, were we more generally convinced of the Importance of this Duty, and more diligent in it * *Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the Faith*, is a Duty which the Holy Ghost calls

* Cor. xiii. 5.

us to, and should be by no means neglected, especially by those who are sensible of the absolute Necessity of being found in Christ. As the Spirit has called us to it, so we may expect his Assistance in it. And what Pleasure do we feel, when the Spirit comes, and *witnesseth with our Spirits that we are the Children of God?* What Advantages do we reap, when he opens the Eyes of our Understandings to know what is the Hope of his Calling, and gives us a View of the Reality of a Work of Grace in our Souls? Let those speak that have felt the Satisfaction.

The timorous doubting Believer will here meet with some suitable and important Hints, that may be useful to resolve his Doubts, scatter his Fears, and raise his Hopes, as well as direct and support him in all the Difficulties he may be exercised with in his Passage through the Wilderness, ——— The slothful Christian will find something suitable, to rouse him from his Slumber, to quicken his Zeal, to warm his Affections, and to stir him up to be pressing towards Zion, with greater Diligence. Upon the whole; the following Sheets appear to be calculated, to help the Christian in the Devotion and Duties of the Closet, to promote the Power and lead us to a taste of the pleasurable Parts of Religion, and to direct, guide, comfort and cheer us in every Circumstance of Difficulty in Life; to keep us from that Despondancy, which is dishonourable to God, and uncomfortable to the Soul; and to animate us with the lively Hopes of a compleat Victory over all our spiritual Enemies, and of our reaching safe at last to the Regions of everlasting Felicity. And oh, may the eternal Spirit, accompany the Reading with his Blessing, and make it effectual to answer these desirable Ends.

A S H O R T
A C C O U N T
Of the Holy L I F E
O F

Mr. Henry Gearing, &c.

IF there be Joy in Heaven among the Angels, and the blessed Inhabitants Above, upon the Conversion of a Sinner ; we may reckon there is so from time to time, upon the Addition to their Number of any such, who by the Grace of God are made meet for the Heavenly State and Life. Among many others, of late deceased, Mr. *H. G.* was doubtless a very welcome Person.

The too frequent Flattery of Funeral Orations I know is a common Objection against speaking or writing any thing of the Dead , because many are commended whose Names are written in the Dust and deserve to perish with their own Dung.

But the Memory of the Just shall however be blessed ; their Death is precious, and their Examples useful to all who knew them, and may be so to many others. It is not, I confess, of every good Man or Woman that dieth, that we can speak such things as we may to the just Commendation of some. Neither is it fit to publish all the Good we can of every Body ; because it may be they had some Blemishes that will make the other incredible, or lessen its Use. But Persons of eminent Grace and Holiness, are the choicest Works of God, the richest Ornaments, the most precious Jewels that can be shewn : For the meanest Saint is incomparably more noble and honourable than the greatest Personages in the World, that are Slaves of Sin, and Enemies to God. But as one Star differs from another in Glory, there are some more lively Images of God, and who better imitate the Pattern of Christ, some Vessels of Mercy filled with Grace above their Fellows. Of such as these we ought to speak, to the Glory of Divine Grace. There is an attractive Influence in their Pattern ; some good Savour and Impression may be left by the serious Perusal of their Lives and Character. Divers have dated their first
Con-

Conversion from reading or hearing such Relations.

But as many an upright Christian, whose Funeral Sermon I may be call'd to preach, will come far short of the Spirit and Practice of Mr. G. so I resolve to speak more sparingly of the Dead, in such Discourses, lest I raise the Expectation of the like, where I cannot conscionably perform it. And on the same Account, I forbear the mention of some things which He desired of me, and I complied with, because I would not encourage others to desire the like.

I hope the publishing of such Examples may be one means to confute, or silence the *Atheism* of the present Age, as if there were no Reality in Religion; that it is meer Notion and Talk, or a Cover for Hypocrisie. An exemplary visible Piety is proper to confute such Cavils, baffle such Prejudices, and convince the Minds of Men, and bring them secretly to wish that they themselves were such. It is certain the unsutable Lives of those who profess Religion, hath greatly stumbled and hardened many in their Profaneness. Some of no ordinary Parts or Education, under Convictions of Sin, and Fears of Hell upon a Death-bed, have told me, that the wicked Lives of such as pretended

to Religion, had more hindered their Seriousness than all the Quirks and Subtilities, or bold Attempts of such as would overthrow the Principles of Christianity.

Besides, serious well-disposed Christians will be encouraged by the Example and Commendation of such, after whose Copy they desire to write. Thanks be to God, they are *not a few*, even in this Age, of whose *Exemplary Lives* there are divers Passages fit to be published: And tho' it would be endless to write all their Lives, yet now and then to set forth a bright Example may be of singular Advantage. Such as knew this, or the other Person in particular, and were themselves Witnesses of the Truth of several things related, will be more apt to be influenced by such an Account, than by the like, or greater things related of others, who have been dead many Years ago, or their Lives written by such who never personally were acquainted with them. And by such Examples we see that strict and serious Religion is possible; and that if your Hearts are set to please God, it is not to be dispaired of.

It I can by the following Narrative excite any to value and improve their Time better, whereof he was so very
choice

the Life of Mr. H. Gearing. xiii

choice and careful : If I can blow up any Coal of that Divine Fervor and Zeal to God, that warm'd his Heart ; if I can but provoke any to mend their Pace, by considering how short they come of what he was, and did, I shall think I did well to punish it.

However, as the Word of God delivered in the Holy Scriptures, and dispensed in the Ministry thereof, hath divers and contrary Effects upon different Subjects, from which God will raise his own Glory ; so will it be with this Relation. But if the Reader gain no Advantage by the perusing of it, he must blame himself for not considering, and applying it with suitable Reflections. For he may here find the Description of a *Real Christian, a true Nathaniel, an Israelite indeed.*

I am not very solicitous to avow my Integrity as to the Truth of every thing related ; because, besides what I have asserted of him from my own Knowledge, all that have lived in his Family, and many others of his Acquaintance in this City, will readily subscribe to the Truth of the rest: Tho' the best Discovery of him is what is transcribed from *his own Papers.* For who can know the inward State and Frame of another Man's Soul, but by his
own

own Declaration of it some way or other. It must be opened some way or other by himself, or it cannot be published and made known to others. The inmost Secrets of a Man's Heart towards God cannot be so well known by the strictest Observation of other Men.

What I have gathered out of his own Manuscripts, is published without altering any thing material in the Expressions, unless here and there one Word, where the Phrase was dark, or subject to Ambiguity. If in some things there seems not that Exactness which some Readers would desire, it ought to be considered, that there are other Readers to whom they may be more sutable, who are not to be neglected. And as to his manner of expressing himself, you must remember he was a plain Citizen, and one who had no need of a polish'd Stile, or any Advantages to gain it. Besides, what he wrote was only for the Comfort of his own Soul; and if he had any farther Eye, for the use of those of his own Family; whose Love and Regard to him might imprint deeper on their Minds and Hearts what was done by him, tho' with less Accuracy than by another Hand.

After

the Life of Mr. H. Gearing. xv

After all, I here pretend not to lessen the Honour and Commendation of any other holy Persons lately deceased, or of any such yet living: For, in substance, the Character of one will sute the Hearts and Lives of all the rest. But all upright Christians do not walk with God in their daily Course, as did this *holy Man*. I may call him so, tho' I do not say he was *perfect*: For a greater than he, *Elias*, was subject to like Passions and Infirmities with us. The best Saints on Earth are but imperfectly sanctified, their Knowledge is imperfect, their Love imperfect, their Self-denial imperfect; they have Remainders of Corruption, and according to the different Temperament of their Bodies, Circumstances and Conditions of Life, they are subject to many Weaknesses, and are sensible of them. But the Grace they receive by constant Prayer, and Dependence, and the Care and Watchfulness they are enabled to use over their Hearts, and Words, and Senses, and against the Occasions of Sin, preserves them from any great Transgressions, and quickly recovers them from lesser ones.

I therefore hope I shall not be blamed for not mentioning his Infirmities and Failings, because I know not how the
Readers

Readers Benefit and Advantage would be thereby promoted: It hath been observed to this purpose, that the Vertues, the Graces, the Perfections of our Brethren set before our View, may be proper to nourish our Humility, suppress Pride, and invite our Imitation: But to divulge their Faults would rather further our Security, and advance our Self-conceit. And as to this excellent Person, his Watchfulness and Temperance, his Devotion and Diligence, his Mortification and Zeal for doing good, argued a very great Purity of Mind and Heart; and his careful Improvement of his Time left little Vacancy for Temptation to fill up: No very great Faults be sure could dwell with such strict Examination of himself every Day, as he continued to use till within *four Days* of his Death. But that being all written in *Short-Hand*, what might have been from thence added to his Character, or transcribed for the Immitation or Instruction of others, is wholly lost. This in the general will be owned by those who were best acquainted with him, that human Infirmities and Imperfections excepted, his Life was one even Thread of serious Godliness, from Morning to Night, from the beginning of the Week, and Month, and Year, to the

the Life of Mr. H. Gearing. xvii

the end, in all Relations, in all Companies, and in all Affairs.

*He was born at Leachlad in Gloucestershire, and baptized there, March the 5th. An. 1632. His Father, Mr. Henry Gearing, was a Shop-keeper, or Mercer in that Town; and for his extraordinary Prudence and Piety, respected, honoured, and loved by Persons of all Persuasions. There are not wanting those now living, who can say of the Father's House, what several know to be true of the Son's, That it was a Nursery of Religion, a little Temple of God, and they thank God they were ever cast under that Roof. It was the Experience of *one, whose hoary Head in the way of Righteousness is a Crown of Glory, with whom our Mr.*

** My Honoured Friend Mr. Joshua Gearing, Sen.*

Gearing served his Apprenticeship: He in his younger Years boarded in his Father's House at Leachlad, and reckons the Example of his ho'y Life to have been a singular Blessing to him in his Youth. His pious Father died of a Consumption, when his Son was about the Age of Thirteen. As did his Uncle, Mr. Simon Gearing, his Father's elder Brother, about six Years after. His Mother, Mrs Ann Gearing, was likewise an eminent Christian, and died at Ramsey

*berry in Wiltshire, January the 8th. 1699
and was there buried.*

But to return to him of whom I am now further to speak. It pleased God to begin very early with him, before he came to London, when he was about twelve or Thirteen Years old. God doth often so bless a good Education of Children; and would oftner do it, if parents would be careful to do their Duty in this Particular with Wisdom and Faithfulness. These were such Discoveries, as I am informed. of his serious Godliness in his Youth, as were observed by many, to the Admiration of the Grace of God. He began betimes to seek after God and Christ: These were his best Days, and he comfortably found him whom his Soul loved. The Pleasure, the Advantage, the Success and Comfort of Devotedness to God in our Youth, is beyond all Expression.

When he came to London, God directed and settled him as an Apprentice with his Cousin Mr. Joshua Gearing, already mentioned, where he had the Advantages of a Religious Family, and constantly attended the serious, affectionate Ministry of Mr. James Nalton, whose Name and Memory is still precious with many in this City: God was pleased to bless his Preaching to his effectual Conver-

the Life of Mr. H. Gearing. xix

Conversion, or rather to nourish and increase the Seeds of Grace planted before. He always thought he could never speak with Honour and Affection enough of Mr. Nalton, whom God hath made so useful to his Soul: He would frequently, to his dying Day, mention with what powerful Impressions on his Conscience his Sermons were accompanied, how he thought himself in a Corner of Heaven under his Ministry; that he could many times have wished to have gone directly to Heaven from the Place of Publick Worship; such a Presence and Power of the Divine Spirit did attend the Gospel Ministrations. May the Residue of this Spirit be more plentifully poured out on the Ministers of Christ in this City and Nation, for the like Effects on the Souls of Men!

He hath often spoken and writ, how sweet and advantageous a Season for Religion, the Time of his Apprenticeship was: What heavenly Thoughts and Meditations he frequently had in the Shop, and behind the Counter. He hath often professed, that by reason of his Freedom at that time from Worldly Cares and Business, it was the best Time he ever enjoyed for God and his Soul in his whole Life. He had then nothing else to do, but to serve God and
please

please his Master, who was the more pleased with him, for loving and pleasing, and serving God. The Conversation he had in Heaven by Ejaculatory Prayer, while he followed his Master's Business, he hath often since reflected on with Joy and Thanks, saying, He would not for all the World but be able to remember what he then enjoyed; for he never had such lively, comfortable, uninterrupted Communion with God afterwards. Tho' in his After-course he continued in this Evidence of a Heavenly Mind and Heart, frequently to lift up his Soul to God whatever Company he was in. He hath sometimes owned, that he enjoyed as much of God in his Thoughts, while walking in the Streets, as when he was upon his Knees.

When his Time was out, he chose to tarry a whole Year or more with his Master, being afraid lest the World should engross too much of his Heart and Time; and had almost resolved to retire into the Country, to be out of Danger of many Temptations, and to have more Opportunities for Meditation and Prayer. But judging (truly enough) that that was not the way to be useful in the World, nor could he bring so much Glory to God in a private retired Life,

the Life of Mr. H. Gearing. .xxi

Life, as by settling in a Family and Calling, he accordingly did both. And chose a futable Companion out of a Religious Family, who desired with him to make Religion her Business; and God was afterwards very kind to him in the like Choice.

It was his Custom every Night to write down in Short-hand some of the most material Things of every Day relating to his Soul, as his Mercies, his Sins, the Frame of his Heart in Duty, gracious Returns of Prayer, special Providences to himself and others, &c. He desired every Night to lie down in Expectation of Death, and Preparation for it, tho' he were in perfect Health: And, through the Goodness of God, he enjoyed an extraordinary Measure of it for many Years. So that, till a little before his Death, I have heard him say, that he had not been above twice kept by Sickness, from hearing a Sermon on the Lord's Day, for the space of Forty Years.

To those Christians who have full leisure for this excellent daily Work of Self-examination, and recording the Result of it, this Course would be of unspeakable Advantage: But I urge it not upon all. It is sufficient to many to renew their Repentance for daily Failings, and record only
the

the extraordinary, and more remarkable Passages of their Lives, not having time to record the ordinary Occurrences of every Day.

But besides what he did every Day, he frequently set apart whole Days with Fasting and Prayer, to examine and try the State of his Soul. Part whereof he transcribed afterwards, tho' but a very little part; which is here added, as containing the Character and Trial of a Real Christian, with the Reason of his transcribing it. And I am perswaded he did it with great Sincerity and Humility; the rather, because, when about a Month or six Weeks before his Death, he was under some Darknes and Clouds, as to his Evidences for Heaven, and apprehended his Time on Earth would be but short, he desired to discourse with me, more than once, about the State of his Soul, (which I shall always remember with Thankfulness to God) in order to my making the better Judgment of his Case, he let me see some of those Papers, written many Years before, but sends me a Letter the next Morning to recal them, mentioning his great Trouble after I was gone, lest what he had done savoured of Pride, and ought rather to have been concealed. Such was the Tenderness of his Conscience in this, and in every thing.

I shall

the Life of Mr. Gearing. xxiii

I shall say less concerning his Examination of himself ; because you have here annexed a short Account of the manner of it. The lawfulness of trying our selves by Marks and Signs of the Truth of Grace, I hope will not be questioned, when it is but to evidence the Sincerity of our Faith and Repentance, and holy Obedience, while we ascribe unto our Lord Jesus Christ what belongs to him as our great High-Priest. All that is done by Christ without us, in order to our Salvation, may and ought to be distinguished from what is done by the Spirit of Christ, and his Grace within us ; because there is a manifest difference between what causeth our Acceptance with God, and that which is evidential of it, in order to our own Comfort.

*His Example in the strict Observation of the Lord's Day, and conscientious Faithfulness in his Family Relations, have been taken notice of to the Edification of many. The Weekly Christian Sabbath was honourable and esteemed by him ; he made it his Delight. He remembered it before it came, by something Preparatory in his Family upon the Saturday Evening. He was early in the Morning on that Day in his Closet, and likewise in Family Worship, with Prayer and Thanksgiving, and reading the Holy Scriptures, (of which
his*

his Children and Servants were to remember something) and so prepared for the Publick Worship. He would not willingly suffer any idle or vain Discourse throughout the whole Day; admonishing all about him to take heed of their Thoughts and Words, in a special manner upon the Lord's Day. He retired as soon as he came home at Noon for a little space, and enquired of Inferiors what they remembred. He express'd his Dislike of those, who had been careless herein, by encouraging those that did better.

His Discourse was always serious, savoury, and suitable at his Table; often minding those about him, how many had gone into Eternity the last Week, and of the Bounty and Kindness of Heaven in the Plenty they enjoyed, both for Spirituals and Temporals beyond others. After Dinner, a Chapter or two was always read, and some part of a serious Practical Book, till it was time to go to the Publick Worship. Therein he was always reverent and serious. After he came home, he retired to his Closet for near an Hour, and charged all the rest of the Family to go alone likewise; then he called them together, began with a short Invocation of God, sung a Psalm, and repeated the Morning Sermon, and prayed with them before Supper. Many who lived with him can witness, that in Family Prayer upon the Lord's Day, he had more than ordinary

the Life of Mr. H. Gearing. xxv

inary Affections and Fervency; and it is the Experience of other Christians. O that Heads of Families would but make a Trial! After Prayer he retired a very little, probably to reflect on his Frame in the last Duty, and then would ask his Children some pertinent Questions concerning the Principles of Religion. After Supper he repeated the Afternoon Sermon, and enquired what they remembered of it.

He was himself the last in the Family who went to Bed, that he might run over the Heads of what he had heard and repeated. For these he reviewed on Monday Morning, and kept in his Memory all the Week, and every Day repeated somewhat thereof to himself, that he might have the Subject of those Sermons continually in his Thoughts, as the Food of his Soul, till another Lord's Day came. He recommended this Practice unto others, hereby to live the Sermons we hear, and to be under an Awe and Influence by them, all the Week after.

On Monday Mornings, ever since the Black Bartholomew-Day, when about Two thousand Ministers were silenced (for want of such a Liberty and Toleration as God is now pleased mercifully to allow us) he did until his Death, accustom himself to rise

at Four a Clock, and oftentimes sooner, spending the time in his Closet till Six, especially in Prayer for the Nation, and the Church of Christ: I have heard that several others agreed with him in the like Practice.

But in his ordinary Course, he was wont to be early every Morning in his Closet, and about Seven a Clock would call his Family together, and read a Psalm or two, and pray with them. His great Measure of Health was a considerable Help to him to do more than others, in this, and several Particulars: And accordingly he improved it, without losing any Time in unnecessary Recreations; saying, he desired no other Recreation, but to think and speak of God, and mind his Glory. He often thankfully acknowledged the Divine Goodness, that his Employment was such, that he had more Time for serious, solitary Religion than others; and that he had more time for reading in his Shop, and might have it shut sooner in the Evening. And he contracted his Business, or would not choose to hurry himself by enlarging of it, with that very Design.

The first thing he did there in the Morning, was to read some part of the Holy Scripture, with the best Annotations he could procure

the Life of Mr. H. Gearing. xxvii

procure upon them, and the like in the Evening. And in reading them over again and again, regularly and in course, he found much Advantage; he still perceived such a Majesty, such a Mystery, such a Depth in them, that he was never weary of fathoming, tho' he could never reach the Bottom: He desired to walk by that Rule, to be guided by that Light, and to derive his Supports, Encouragements, and Hopes from thence.

I hardly ever knew one more careful of his Time, and all that knew him must say the same. He would tarry but a very little while in any Company, where he might not do, or receive Good. He was so punctual in his Time of Retirement for Secret Prayer, about Six in the Summer, and Five in the Winter, (unless he was bearing a Sermon at that Hour) that he would usually make some Excuse or other to break away from Company, tho' he returned to them in Half an Hour. His Communion with God there was discovered by the Frame of his Spirit when he came from thence. It is there, we speak our Minds and Hearts more freely to God, and there he communicates of his gracious Influence in a special manner to us. He found more Satisfaction and Comfort in one such Hour, by pouring out his Soul to God alone,

A short Account of
 than in the most witty, chearful Conversation of such, whose Discourse administers no Grace or Profit to the Hearers.

When he hath been desired to go to Bed sooner, or as soon as others, he would often say he would do as others, if he was not certain that he must die. But our sleeping Time he said was lost, as to any spiritual Good, any further than it fits us for our Duty, by preserving Health. The last thing he did every Evening, was to go into his Closet, and with Prayer and Self-examination to close the Day.

Once a Week, viz. every Friday Night, (at a little before his Death he said) it had been his constant Custom to review the Mercies of his whole Life, thereby to promote his Humility and Thankfulness, to keep up his Hope in God, and quicken his chearful, diligent Obedience to him.

His Care and Concern for the Souls of those under his Charge, especially his Children, was very extraordinary, and attended with good Success, as several of his Relations (living and dying) have owned. Of his usefulness to one related to him, you have some Account in the Narrative of her Conversion.

the Life of Mr. H. Gearing. xxix.

to God, which is here annex'd. His Counsels and Example made those in his Family begin to love Religion for his sake, which afterwards they did for its own. God doth often bring us to him by Instruments of Nature and Affection, and give the Influence of his Spirit to carry on those good Beginnings.

He usually ask'd the Assembly's Catechism in his Family, twice every Week, and encouraged Inferiors by Rewards to learn it, and to get some select Portions of Scripture by Heart, and so he brought them to delight in it. With what Solitude, and Care, and unwearied Pains, with what Compassion, and Pity, and hearty Affection he endeavoured the Conversion of some, and the Recovery of others related to him, from their Deslensions in Religion, I and several others can testify.

His Piety was uniform, equal and harmonious, and all of a piece; and therefore his ordinary Converse was grave and serious, edifying and useful; his Discourse becoming a Christian, that was under the Eye and Awear of God, and in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long. He was always ready to begin or promote such Discourse, and greatly lamented that when good People meet together, they converse

so little upon Spiritual and Religious Subjects. I wish, for my own sake, I had spent more time with him upon this Account, for he desired it not on any other. He valued not Visits of Ceremony and Compliments, no not of Ministers, or any others, that would not help him as a Christian. I trust his Memory will be a living Sermon to me, and to many others that knew him.

In his Trade he had many and great Disappointments and Losses, and yet bore them with admirable Patience. He thanked God that he was carried through them with so much Calmness and Satisfaction, that he could always speak good of God; tho' hardly any, that trade for more, have been known to have lost so much.

He would not buy or sell without lifting up his Heart to God for Direction. And as an Argument of his tender Conscience, I have been informed by one (who must needs know the Truth of it) that he would not let his Silk lie on the damper side of the Warehouse, lest it should thereby encrease in Weight, and so wrong the Buyer.

He walked with God in his Calling so regularly, as a Christian, that I am perswaded
be

The Life of Mr. H. Gearing. xxxi

he enjoyed more of God in his Shop and Warehouse, in his Trade and Business, than many of us do in our Retirements for Prayer and Devotion. For let him come when he would from his secular Affairs, his Mind was more Spiritual and Heavenly, than most ordinary Christians are, when they come from the solemn Exercises of Religion. In short, his Principles, his Thoughts, his Inclinations, his Affections and Actions, his Carriage and Converse in the Whole of them, was such as might be truly called a walking with God.

He was ready to do Good to all his Acquaintance, by Counsel and Reproof, by seasonable Instruction and Admonition; whereof divers now living must needs be sensible; and some of them, I hope, do thank God for his Freedom in that kind.

His Charity to the Poor was answerable to the rest, according to his Ability. Many a poor Family of Country Ministers, and Ministers Widows, in City and Country, will feel that he is dead: For what he could not do of himself, he would endeavour to procure of others, for the Relief of such whose Necessities he knew.

He never neglected a Monthly Opportunity of coming to the Lord's Table, tho' he hath often complained to me, that he had not ordinarily any sensible ravishing Joy; however Careful and Strict he was in his Preparations before, as well as Devout and Reverent when he came. But he durst not stay away: He came humbly to pay Homage to a Crucified Saviour, and to avow to all the World that he gloried only in the Cross of Christ; and was resolved to be found in the way of his Duty.

Now it would be expected, that One so Exemplary, so Circumspect, so much above this World, One so useful upon Earth, and so ripe for Heaven, should have lived in the most raised Consolations, and the most joyful Transports, as if he had been already almost in Heaven, or just come from thence. Surely, will some say, such an one as He must have the Earnest, the Seal, the Fore-tastes of Glory, beyond his Brethren; he must needs walk on the Top of Pisgah, in the Light of God's Countenance, in the Sight of the Heavenly Canaan, and be past the Fears, and Doubts, and Complaints of other trembling Christians. But God did not think this fit for him, in the latter part of his Life. Nevertheless he had that which was equivalent, or better than the highest Flights of Assurance can be.

the Life of Mr. H. Gearing. xxxiii

be. For under his Complaints of Doubts, and Deadness, and want of sensible Communion with God, he had a most steady Trust in God through Jesus Christ, and an uniform Obedience. And, as he has been often told, his Doubts seemed to proceed from the Height of his Grace, rather than the Weakness of it. For such was his extraordinary Love to God, that he never thought he could have Evidence enough of the Divine Presence and Favour; tho' that was mixed with some Error of Judgment, as expecting more than God hath promised in that kind; and as arguing from such Arbitrary Dispensations of God, unto such Conclusions, as cannot justly be drawn from the Enjoyment, or the want of these Things. For certainly his judicious Love to God, his inward Esteem of Holiness and Heaven, his fixed Hatred and Abhorrence of Sin, and his habitual Self-denial and Devotedness to God, with constant Watchfulness and Care to please him, and keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God and Man, is a better Evidence of one beloved of God, than the highest Transports can amount to: Especially in his Case, who, under some Darkness and Fears, was able yet to hold on his Way, and his Work, and to persevere with unshaken Steadfastness to the very last.

xxxiv *A short Account of*

Tho' something also of his Natural Temper, and bodily Constitution, ought to be considered, to abate his Suspicion of himself, upon the Account of his not having such raised, sensible Consolations, and Joys, as some others. Besides that, his Humility in judging of himself, and his earnest Desire of farther Communion with God, made him overlook what he did enjoy, even in this kind. For often, when he joined with others, or when he prayed alone, his Affections were more lively, after having been Forty Years in Christ, than most young Converts are the First Year.

However, in this God was very gracious to him, that, tho' he feared the Devil might assault him at last, he did not permit it. But with a calm Submission, and regular, steady Trust, and Hope in the Divine Mercy, with Eyes, and Hands, and Heart lift up to Heaven, he quietly departed this Life, and is at Rest in the Bosom of Christ.

If I would pronounce a Blessing on his Family, and surviving Relations, upon his Wife, and Children, his Friends, and Acquaintance, that love and honour his Memory; I know not how to do it by a more profitable Prayer, than to beg of God that
they

the Life of Mr. H. Gearing. xxxv

they may tread in his Steps, and walk as
he walked; that his God may be their
God; that they may follow him as he was a
Follower of Christ; and so at last be more
than Conquerors over the World, and Sin,
and Death, and him that hath the Power of
it, the Devil. Thanks be to God who hath
given him, and assured us, of the Victory,
through our Lord Jesus Christ: To him be
Glory throughout all the Churches for ever.
Amen.

THE

(1)

THE
Character and Trial
OF
A REAL CHRISTIAN.

Now follows, out of his own Papers, the
manner of his examining his Heart, and
Life, State and Frame, and the Result
thereof recorded, and written for his
support in After-Difficulties. Some may
be excited by it to an imitation, and others
find encouragement by what related him
against his Doubts and fears, and enabled
him to persevere, even without full
illumination.

HENRY GEARING.
THO' I have been under much Hard-
ship and Distress for many Years,
yet I thought good, for my En-
couragement, here to record God's Good-
ness to me sometimes. By looking over
my

T H E

Character and Trial

O F

A R E A L C H R I S T I A N .

Now follows, out of his own Papers, the manner of his examining his Heart, and Life, State and Frame, and the Result thereof recorded, and written for his Support in After-Difficulties, Some may be excited by it to an Imitation, and others find Encouragement by what reliev'd him against his Doubts and Fears, and enabled him to persevere, even without full Assurance.

H E N R Y G E A R I N G .

TH O' I have been under much *Hardness and Deadness* for many Years, yet I thought good, for my Encouragement, here to record God's Goodness to me sometimes. By looking over
my

my Books, in which I have wrote down in Short-hand every Night, how it was with me in the Day; I find that I have sometimes been quickned and affected in Prayer; often in Family Prayer at Night on the Lord's Day. Tho' I began very much indisposed, yet it pleased God to draw out my Heart in earnest Desires, and I have had some Meltings more than usual. At other Times, in Family-Prayer at Night, I have been more than ordinarily affected. And sometimes under the Word preach'd: Once at the *Morning Lecture*, when I heard a Sermon of *buying the Pearl of Price*. At other Times I find I was affected greatly in Family-Prayer, so as scarce to be able to speak for weeping. At another Time I have recorded how I was quickened by hearing a Sermon of Mr. *Swinnock* on that Text, *He will not break the bruised Reed*. At several other Times have had lively Affections in secret Prayer.

Often in my Walk to *Clapham*, I have had my Heart drawn out in earnest, fervent Desires after God. Once repeating on a Lord's Day Evening, a Sermon on that Text, *Behold I stand at the Door and knock, and whosoever opens to me, I will come in and sup with him*; I was so affected, I could not go on for Tears, but was
fain

fain to lay down my Book. At another Time the like in repeating a Sermon of *the Redemption of Time*. At other Times I find recorded, that on the Lord's Day I went to Family-Prayer very sad, but God did greatly assist me, and my Soul was melted, so that I could not proceed or speak for Tears. At other Times in Prayer, and sometimes in *singing of Psalms*. But, for the most Part, I have been a great Stranger to Joy and Comfort ever since the Days of my Youth. These Things I wrote, *March 18, 1689*, being Remarks in general of near Twenty Years past.

As to what I have written in this little Book, it was first in Short-Hand, and never intended to be transcribed. But afterwards I considered that many Things in it might be of Use to me, by another's reading of it, if it should please God to lay his Hand upon me, that I could not myself read my Short-Hand: And I know not but something in it may be useful to others.

I hope and pray it may be so unto many, if the like serious Spirit accompany every Reader in the Perusal of the following Papers, as he had in writing them: Beg it of God, and then begin to read.

Anno 1676, March 28.

HAVING had some Thoughts to keep a secret Fast in my Closet, chiefly to search and try the State of my Soul, this Day I did it, and hope I did set about it in the Integrity of my Heart: My chief Design was to examine how the Case stood between God and my Soul, whether I had indeed a Work of saving Grace wrought in me. And that I might get Corruption that is strong more mortified, especially the Sin I was most inclined unto, and that I might be enabled from God to carry it better in my Christian Course, both in my Family and in secret Retirements, to the Glory of God.

After Prayer, that God would help me to try myself, I went to the Work of *Self-Examination* by the Characters that Mr. *Ambrose* hath given, and by some Characters my Cousin *Calamy* laid down, and others of Mr. *Allen*, Mr. *Nalson*, and Mr. *Swinmork*. I spent a good deal of Time herein, and hope, I desired to deal impartially with myself; and did beg of God heartily, that I might make a right Judgment of myself: I endeavoured to keep my Heart close to the

Work;

Work; and tho' I could not meet with great Comfort, yet upon serious Search I cannot find but that God hath wrought *true Grace* in me, blessed be his Name; I hope I may have recourse to this Day, while I live, for Support in any Case.

I did also read over the *Covenant* I entered into with the Lord about nine Years since, and renewed my Covenant, and gave up myself afresh to the Lord, and took him for my God and Portion. I hope in the Lord that I was sincere and upright. I found some Ease and Quiet in my Mind afterwards. O that I may not now grow careless, but live answerably, and remember I have renewed my Covenant with the Lord! and if he hath in any wise spoke Peace to my Soul, let me not again return to Folly, for the Lord Jesus Christ's Sake.

An. 1676, July 27, Looking over my Book where I enter at Night how it is with me every Day, I find I have been out of order many Times in Duty, since the Trial of myself mentioned here, but hope I did desire to have my Heart with God. And the Lord was pleased sometimes in Duty to draw out my Soul in earnest and hearty Desires after him: My Heart, through Mercy, hath been sometimes (tho' too seldom) in a good Frame; the Lord have

6 *The Character and Trial*

have Mercy on me, and grant I may be sincere and upright with him. He is pleased still (as for many Years past) to withdraw from me, and I do not meet with much Comfort in his Ordinances. But I remember what Mr. N. used to say, that *Grace is better than Comfort*. God grant that I may make sure of *Grace*, and act and exercise *Grace*, and wait upon him for *Comfort*. It is worth waiting for all the Days of my Life: The Lord help me, tho' I sit in Darkness and see no Light to trust in the Lord, and stay myself on my God. The Lord help me to keep up Faith and Hope in him, through Christ, to wait and trust, and hope, and believe still; against Hope of Sense, to believe in Hope of a Promise. The Lord make me careful to mind his Glory, and doing my Duty in the Place in which he hath set me; for I am apt to be troubled, lest I should fail of my Duty towards those committed to my Charge. The Lord in Mercy grant I may set to his Work with all my Might, and get my Work done before my Day of Life be ended; and that my Heart may be thoroughly taken off from this World, and I may prepare for publick Calamities, which are much feared, by reason of the abounding of all Sin and Wickedness more and more. The Lord enable me to do
and

and suffer his Will, and let me have his Presence, and his Promise made good, not to suffer me to be tempted above what he will enable me to bear, 1 Cor. 10. 13, and that I may readily let all go for Christ, if I am called to it. The Lord grant I may be made meet to be Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, and get my Evidences for Heaven ready, which, through the Assistance and Help of God, I desire to go about. The Lord grant I may not be deceived, but may gather *such Evidences* as will hold out, and bear me up in the midst of Troubles, and Trials, yea, in the Hour of Death, and the Day of Judgment. The Lord in infinite Mercy sanctify to me the Death of others: God hath of late taken away many of my Neighbours, Acquaintance, Friends, and Relations, Ministers as well as others (a little while since Mr. *Pledger* and Mr. *Wells* in one Day). O that all may be sanctified, and especially the Death of my *Wife*, that I may yet make such use of that Providence as the Lord would expect; and be ready and prepared for my own Departure hence, whensoever it shall please my dear God and Father to call me home.

Being now about to enter here, what I have to shew for a Work of Grace in my Heart, and a Right and Title to Heaven,
I desire

8 *The Character and Trial*

I desire of the Lord to help me in this great Affair, that I may not be deceived, but that what I here enter may be the true State of my Soul, and that which will help out, and yield me Comfort in an Hour of Distress.

It hath been in my Thoughts several times to enquire what I had to shew for my Hope of Heaven; that which ran most in my Mind was Faith and Repentance, which, upon diligent Search of my Heart, I hope I have.

First, For Faith: If I have true Faith, I shall certainly be saved, so saith the Holy Scriptures, *He that believes shall be saved.* Joh. 3. 16. *For God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have Everlasting Life.* Now Faith in Christ is described in the Assemblies Catechism to be a *saving Grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Christ alone for Salvation, as he is offered to us in the Gospel, which I hope I desire to do:* I hope I do most heartily desire to take Christ on his own Terms, as King, Priest, and Prophet, in all his Offices, and am willing to be ruled by him as well as saved by him: I hope I desire to rest upon Jesus Christ alone for Salvation, and own no other Saviour but him. I hope I have the Faith of Reliance, to rest and center in Christ. I hope I can with

all

all my Soul throw myself upon the Mercy of God in Christ; and if I perish, to perish there, trusting in him that I shall not perish. Blessed be God! I am often lifting up my Heart to Christ: O my dear Jesus! Blessed Jesus! on thee, on thee alone I rest, when I am in Fears, and Doubts, and Troubles. I hope I desire to say with the Church, *in the Lord have I Righteousness and Strength*: Righteousness for Justification, and Strength for Sanctification, and the subduing of Sin. I hope I desire to renounce any Trust in my own Righteousness and Duties, and wholly to rely and rest upon Jesus Christ. When I have performed any Duty, I desire to own that I deserve Hell for the sinful Imperfections of it; yea, for the best Duty I can perform: And to have my Trust only in the Death and Merits, Satisfaction and Intercession of Christ. Tho' Spiritual Pride is very apt to rise in me, yet I hope I do not allow it, the Lord let my Heart more against it. I hope I desire with the Apostle, *Phil. 3. 9, to be found in him, not having my own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith.*

I hope Christ is precious to me, now that is an Evidence of Faith; *1 Pet. 2. 7, For you that*

that believe he is precious. I hope I desire to prize Christ above all the World; and if I know my Heart, I would not part with the Hopes I have by Christ of Heaven for ten thousand Worlds. I hope I desire to prize Jesus Christ, as the Chiefest of ten thousand, altogether lovely. The Lord make me upright in this Matter, that I may see the Worth and Excellency that is in him, so as to be in love with him.

Secondly, For Repentance: If I have that Grace, I am sure to be saved; *Acts 3. 19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the Times of refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord. Luke 13. 3. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish; therefore if we do repent, we shall not perish.* Now Repentance is described to be a saving Grace, whereby a Sinner, out of the true Sense of his Sin, and Apprehension of the Mercy of God in Christ, doth with Grief and Hatred of his Sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavours after new Obedience. I hope the Lord hath wrought this Repentance in me: I hope he hath given me a true Sight and Sense of Sin, and that I am convinced of the Evil and Danger of it. I hope I have an Apprehension also of the Mercy of God in Christ: I do not at all doubt, but there is Mercy enough in God

God, through Christ, to forgive and pardon the greatest Sins, if they are repented of. The Lord hath declared himself to be the Lord God gracious and merciful, pardoning Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin, Exod. 34. 6 I hope I desire to be truly sorry for all my Sins, to grieve and mourn for them; tho' my Heart be hard, yet I hope I could be glad if it were broken, that I could mourn more for my Sins. Surely it hath been a Trouble to me, many times, in Confession of Sin, that I could not mourn and weep, and was not affected as I desired. I hope I desire to *bate Sin* also, the Lord work a true Hatred of all Sin more and more in me: I hope I desire to turn from all Sin unto God, with full Purpose of Heart to cleave to him: I hope the Bent of my Soul is right for God; tho' I have many Failings and Miscarriages, I hope the full Purpose and Resolution of my Heart is for God and his Ways.

It being upon my Mind what I had further to note that might be an Evidence of Grace, I hope these Things following, which it pleased God to bring to my Thoughts, may be some ground to believe God hath wrought savingly upon me.

Surely I do *confess* my Sins often to the Lord in secret, and desire to have my Heart

Heart penitently affected with them, and hope I desire to forsake all my Sins. Now the Scripture saith, 1 Job. 1. 9. *If we confess our Sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from all Unrighteousness.* And Prov. 28. 13. *Who so confesseth and forsaketh his Sins shall have Mercy.* I hope I do not allow myself in any Sin, but desire Power against it, as well as Pardon of it; yea, the Sin I am most inclined to, tho' my Heart is often apt to go out after it, the Lord forgive it. Yet I hope it is my earnest Desire that I may have Strength against it. The Lord help me to say with David, Psal. 18. 23. *I was upright before him, and kept myself from mine Iniquity.* I hope I desire from my Soul to mourn for Heart-Sins, as Hardness and Deadness, and Wandrings, and Distractions in Duty, &c. I hope this is a good Sign that I am (if my Heart deceives me not) really troubled for secret Sins which the World knows nothing of; and that I do not allow sinful Thoughts. I hope I desire to mourn for the Sins of the Land; and to lay to Heart the great Dishonours done to God by others.

I hope there is a Change wrought in me, and that I am a new Creature, 2 Cor. 5. 17. *If I am a new Creature, then I am*

in Christ: I hope so, because there are such strivings and fightings in me against Sin, such strugglings between the Flesh and the Spirit. There is certainly a resisting of Sin, if my Heart do not wonderfully deceive me. Now Mr. N. used to say, *It is true Grace to resist Sin, it is strong Grace to conquer Sin.* I consider how it was with Paul, Rom. 7. he saith there was a Law in his Members warring against the Law of his Mind; and the Evil that he would not do, that he did: Methinks it is so with me sometimes; I hope this striving and struggling is a Sign I am not dead in Sins and Trespases; for a dead Man strives not, moves not. I beg of God often and heartily, that I may be sincere and upright, and hope I have from my Heart many Times pray'd with David, that God would search me and try me in Mercy, and find out if there be any way of Wickedness in me, if there be any Sin that lies hid in my Soul; and have been glad when Ministers have come to Examination, that so I might try myself, especially in my younger Years, when I heard Mr. N. and used to try myself by Characters, that he laid down, and have then found Comfort and great Hopes of a Work of Grace wrought in me; and wondered how those that heard that Soul-awakening Minister could

bear it, if they did not find God had been at Work in their Souls. I do remember, when I was young, what Delight I took in hearing that good Man, and have been as it were in a Corner of Heaven; I have often had my Heart quickned, warmed, and much drawn out to God. Now, tho' to my Shame, I may write it, I have abated much in my Zeal and Love to God and his Ways, since I have had more to do with the World, and a Family to provide for; yet I desire to remember the Days of old, the Years of the Right-hand of the most High, and hope I may take Comfort from the Experience I have had formerly; remembering where Grace is once wrought, it shall never be extinguished; whom Christ loves once, he loves to the End; and that God never repents that he gives Grace to any.

I hope, tho' by my Sins I have caused the Lord much to depart from me for many Years, that I do not meet with such Quickening and Comfort in Duties as formerly, yet that I do not content myself in this Condition, but desire to have my Soul follow hard after God, to lament after him; and do I hope, prize a Smile from him, and the Light of his Countenance above the whole World; and do often pray with *David*, Psal. 4. *When*

others

others say, *Who will shew us any Good? that God would lift up the Light of his Countenance upon me.* And I desire with the Spouse, to seek him whom (I hope I may say at least) my Soul desires to love. I hope it is a good Sign, that I have frequent Thoughts of God, and do often lift up my Heart to him; as when I lay down at Night, and awake in the Morning, I desire my first and last Thoughts may be with God; I hope I may say with David, *I desire to set the Lord always before me, Psal. 16. 8.*

I hope I am desirous and willing to yield Obedience to all the Commandments of God, and not to pick and chuse: I hope I would not allow myself in the Omission of any Duty. Now Christ saith, *Ye are my Disciples, if ye do whatsoever I command you, Joh. 15. 14.* I hope I have from my Heart prayed many times that God would make known to me how I should walk to please him. I hope I desire patiently to continue in well-doing, and to wait upon God, tho' I do not meet with him. Now there is a Promise of Blessedness to them that wait for him, *Isa. 30. 18.* and the Promise is, *Rom. 2. 7. To them, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, that God would give Eternal Life.* I hope I desire my Will may be according to God's Will, and would

do better than I do. Now if I am but really willing, tho' I have many Failings, and fall infinitely short, yet it is said, 2 Cor. 8. 12. *Where there is a willing Mind, it is accepted according to what a Man hath, and not according to what he hath not.* And our Saviour speaks graciously to his Disciples when he found them asleep, Mat. 26. 41. *The Spirit truly is willing, but the Flesh is weak.*

I hope I desire to be merciful to them who are in Misery, and have sometimes been glad of an Opportunity (tho', the Lord forgive, too backward at other times.) Now our Lord saith, *Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy.* Mat. 5. 7. I hope I desire to cleanse myself from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, to have my Heart purified. Now it is said, *Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God,* Mat. 5. 8. I hope I have counted the Cost, what it may cost me to be a Christian indeed, and am fully resolved in the Strength of Christ to let all go for him. It is my Desire and earnest Prayer (I hope from my very Heart) that if God call me to it, I may be enabled to lay down my Life for his sake. Now Christ saith, *He that forsakes Houses, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for his Name's sake, shall receive an hundred fold, and inherit everlasting*

lasting Life, Mat. 19. 29. and he that loseth his Life shall find it, I hope I desire, if I am called to it, to bear the Cross as well as receive the Crown. Now it is said, *If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him,* 2 Tim. 2. 12, These things it pleased God to bring to my Mind as some ground of Hope that my State is good. I enter'd these Things here, Aug. 11, 1676.

Now my Intention is, if it please God, to make use of other Helps, and search my Heart by them, and enter them down here, that I may have resort to them in a time of need; and the Lord help me further in this great Work of *Self-Examination*, that I may not be deceived for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

Having endeavoured to search my Heart thoroughly, after earnest Prayer to God, I hope I find the Evidences of Grace in me that Mr. *Allen* hath laid down, which are these.

1. Where there is true Grace, there is a hearty Willingness to part with every Sin. Where ever there is this Breach made between Sin and the Soul, it is Grace that hath made it. When Sin hath lost the Will, it hath lost the Man; when Christ hath gained the Will, he hath gained the Man. *Give me thy Heart*, is the same as,

Be willing to be mine. Reason saith, I ought to turn; Conscience saith, I must turn, and yet nothing may follow: But when the Heart saith, *I will turn to God*, then the Work is done. Reason saith, These Idols ought not to stand; Conscience saith, These Lusts must be subdued: But when the *Will* saith to them, Get you hence, there is a Work of Grace begun. This Willingness discovers itself to be *prevailing*.—First, When a Man is truly willing to part with Sin, there will be *Resolutions* against it, he takes part with God against Sin, and uses all Means for the conquering of it.—Secondly, This Resolution will bring forth *Resistance*. An Heart weary of Sin will fall to striving against Sin, Gal. 5. 17. *The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh; these two are contrary one to the other,*

2. Where ever there is true Grace, there is a preferring in the Esteem and Choice, of a strict and sincere Godly Life, above any other Life in the World. Tho' the foolish World runs eagerly after Money and Pleasure, spend their Days, waste their Lives, prostitute their Consciences, throw away their Souls upon these Things; yet one moments Communion with God, one Day spent in the Fear of the Lord, is better than all this; Psal. 4. 6.

There

There be many that say, *Who will shew us any Good? But, Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance on me,* saith a gracious Soul. *Thou hast put Gladness in my Heart, more than in the time when their Corn and Wine increased,* Psal. 17. 14, 15. *The Men of the World have their Portion in this Life, their Bellies thou fillest with thy hid Treasure; they are full of Children, and leave the rest of their Substance to their Babes: But as for me, I will behold thy Face in Righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy Likeness.* The Men of this World as they seek, so they have their Portion in this Life. They have a gallant time of it here, great Portions, great Prosperity, enough to spend on themselves, and leave to their Children after them; this they have, and much good may it do them; let me but behold the Face of God in Righteousness, walk before the Lord in my Integrity, keep a good Conscience, live in the Obedience of his Will, and in the Light of his Countenance; and then let them take the Corn and Wine, and what else they can get. *Let the Lord be mine, and I shall never envy them their Portion; Psal. 119. 30. I have chosen the way of Truth: V. 111. Thy Testimonies have I taken as my Heritage for ever.* Observe, 1. That a Godly

20 *The Character and Trial*

Man's settled Judgment is, That a Godly Life is the best and happiest Life. 2. That a Godly Man's Choice is according to his Judgment: He esteems the Fear of the Lord above Gold, and he chooses it before Gold: He is better pleased and doth rather take up with the meanest and most afflicted Condition in a way of Holiness, than with the most plentiful and prosperous Estate in a way of Sin: He prefers the Poverty of Christ before the Riches of the World. 3. Godly Men and Worldly Men may be known one from the other, by the *Choice* they make for themselves; he that makes a Worldly Choice is a Worldly Man, and he that makes a Godly Choice is a Godly Man.

3. Whosoever hath true Grace, doth actually live a Godly Life: The Tree is best known by its Fruit; the Sincerity of our Purposes by our Performances. *He that doth Righteousness is righteous,* 1 Joh. 3. 7. A Godly Man makes Godliness the Business of his Life. Religion is a Christian's Trade: a Man's Trade is his constant Work, and not the Exercise of now and then a Day or two, Godliness is a Christian's daily Walk: Do not inquire only about your Affections, what your Desires are, or what your Joys are, what your Comforts are, or what your Peace is, but what your *Paths* are. When

When all comes to all, this is the surest Mark, *He that hath Righteousness is righteous, he that doth not Righteousness is not of God.*

Mr. Sheppard, in his *Sincere Convert*, lays down three Marks, wherein a Child of God goes beyond a Hypocrite; and I having examined my Heart, hope I find them in me.

1. No Hypocrite, or Unregenerate Man, tho' he goes never so far, let him do never so much, yet *he lives in one Sin or other*, secret or open, little or great: Now I hope in the Lord, I do not live in any Sin.

2. No Hypocrite, no Unregenerate Man, ever came to be *poor in Spirit*, and to be carried off from all Duties unto Christ, in regard of Dependance and Trust. If it were possible for them to forsake and break loose for ever from all Sin, yet here they stick. They seek to save themselves by their Duties without Christ. Now if my Heart doth not very much deceive me, I desire to renounce all Things, and rest only on Christ.

3. If any Unregenerate Man come unto Christ, he never takes up his Rest in Christ *only*; but he would have Christ and the World too, is not content with Christ alone. But I hope I desire to be

content with Christ alone ; and to say, as the Martyr, None but Christ, None but Christ.

Mr. D. in his Book of the *Lord's Supper*, to prove that one hath a Principle of Spiritual Life, and is not dead in Trespases and Sins, writes thus : Canst thou groan and cry to the Lord for an Interest in Christ, and will nothing quiet and still thee but Jesus Christ ? Then surely thou dost *live* ; all the Creatures cannot quiet thee, till thou hast Hopes that Christ is formed in thee. Surely I find this Sign of Spiritual Life in me. *Again*, Dost thou *grow* ? It may be thou canst not say thou hast more Grace ; but this thou findest, thou hast more Desires after Grace ; that is, more Grace. Art thou not only thankful for a little Grace, but art reaching after more ? Dost thou grow more weary of thy Sin, and more earnest after Christ ? I hope in the Lord it is thus with me, that I am more weary of Sin, and desire more Grace : Now Growth is a Sign of Life. *Again*, Put this Question to thyself, Do I hunger and thirst after Christ ? This is an Evidence of Spiritual Life : Dead Men do not hunger and thirst after Christ. Now I hope in the Lord I do hunger and thirst after Christ, and nothing but himself will content me.

Again, Ask thy Soul, Do I love God and Christ, or do I not? These Marks he gives of Love to Christ. *Lord! I love thee*; for I am grieved at thy Absence, and am rejoiced at thy Presence. *Lord! I love thee*; for I love those that are like Thee. *O my Lord! I love thee*; for I love the Place and Duties where thou art wont, to meet thy People, and warm their Hearts; but if thou art not there, I cannot take up contentedly with them. *Lord! I humbly say, I love thee*; for I dare not deny but I am grieved, when thou art dishonoured by myself or others; tho' I grieve for this less than I should, because I love the less than I ought. *Lord! I love thee*; for I desire to have an Heart that should be willing to part with all for thee; things *sinful* in themselves at all Times, and Things lawful when thou callest me to it. Once more I humbly say, *I love thee*; for I would have an Heart to love, and long, and look for thy Coming and Appearance in Glory.

Mr. *Ambrose*, directing to try our Title to Heaven, adviseth, *First*, To write down the Scripture-Marks of Grace or Glory, and mentions these several Scriptures following. 1 Joh. 2. 3. *Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his Commandments.* 2. Cor. 1. 12. *For our rejoicing is this,*

24 The Character and Trial

this, the Testimony of our Conscience, that in Godly Simplicity and Sincerity we have had our Conversation in the World. 1 Joh. 3. 9. 10. *Whosoever is born of God sinneth not, because his Seed abideth in him; neither can he sin, because he is born of God. In this the Children of God are manifest, &c.* 1 Joh. 4. 13. *Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* 1. Joh. 3. 14. *We know that we have passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren.* James 1. 12. *There is a Crown of Life the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

But above all, observe these Texts following, as containing the special Gospel-way of Justification and Glorification. Joh. 3. 16. *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have Everlasting Life.* Joh. 5. 24. *He that believeth, hath Everlasting Life, and shall not come into Condemnation; but is passed from Death unto Life.* Joh. 6. 40. *And this is the Will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have Everlasting Life.* Joh. 20. 31. *These things are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and*
that

that believing ye might have Life through his Name. Acts 16. 31. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Rom. 10. 9, 10. If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy Heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. Heb. 10. 39. We are not of them who draw back unto Perdition: but of them that believe, to the saving of the Soul. 1 Joh. 5. 13. These things have I written unto you, that believe in the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have Eternal Life. From the first Text we gather the Scripture-mark of universal Obedience; from the second, Sincerity; from the third, Opposition against, and Abstinence from Sin; from the fourth, Spiritual Performance of holy Duties; from the fifth, a Love of Christ; from all the rest, Faith in Christ; the Root and Spring of all other Graces, and necessary to Pardon and Eternal Life.

Proceed we now to put the Question to ourselves, but be sure to state it aright: Let it not be, Whether there be any Good in us at all? For so we shall err on the one hand; nor yet, Whether we have such and such a degree and measure of Grace? For so we shall err on the other hand:

26 *The Character and Trial*

hand: But, Whether, according to the forementioned Scriptures, such and such a saving Grace be in us or not? Now I having begged of God his Help to try the State of my Soul by what follows, this 17th. of August 1676. and I do hope I find the true Marks of saving Grace in my Soul, and I desire here to enter them down that I may have recourse to it in Time of need, and the Lord grant I be sincere.

1. *O my Soul!* Hast thou Respect to, and dost thou observe all Gods Commandments? dost thou keep the Law in Truth and Sincerity, tho' not in gradual Perfection? dost thou know God in Part, and love God truly by a sincere Obedience? dost thou keep the Commandments in an Evangelical Sense? and wherein thou failest, dost thou acknowledge thy Failings, and rely upon Christ for Pardon? Is thy universal Obedience internal and spiritual, as well as external? Is thy Delight in the Law of God after the Inward Man? Is thy Obedience to the Duties of both Tables? Dost thou make Conscience of particular Duties in every Relation?

2. *O my Soul!* Hast thou Sincerity and Uprightness of Heart? Is there a Powerful Change of the whole Man by the Grace of God? Dost thou do what is good upon this account, because God commands it?

not because it will agree with thy Ends and Advantage, but because God hath required it? art thou diligent and conscientious in secret Duties to perform them? and in Spiritual or Heart Sins, and secret Lusts, to avoid them? Dost thou serve God in Spirit? Dost thou eye God, whether in private or public? Dost thou set thyself zealously against those Sins *thou* art most inclined unto? Dost thou hate Sin most in thyself, and in those that *are* nearest unto thee? Hast thou respect to all God's Commandments? But yet to the Duties of the first Table before the second, to the Command of greater Duties before those of lesser Duties? Or if in all these Particulars thou findest not such an Uprightness as hath no Deceit or Falshood, or carnal Respects, at all joined with it, (for as all other Graces are but in part, so are we *sincere* and *upright* but in *Part*) art thou humbled under thy Hypocrisy and spiritual Guile? And dost thou trust only to Christ? And thou cry, as *David* did, for *Truth in the inward Parts*? Dost thou observe the Frame of thy Heart in those Things which none but God knows?

3. O my Soul! Dost thou oppose and abstain from Sin? And is this Opposition and Abstinence settled and fixed in thy Heart, not only for some Fits and

and Seasons, but is it the habitual Inclination of thy Soul? Is there in thee a Difficulty, yea a kind of Impossibility to sin with *Wilfulness*, and *purposed Continuance*, or with such an universal Consent of Soul as wicked Men do? And doth this Impossibility to Sin arise from a kindly Work of Grace within, and not from any terrible Restraint upon thy Conscience without? Dost thou in good Measure and by Degrees not only leave outward gross Sins, but even conquer and crucifie the inward Body of Sin? dost thou oppose and leave Sin, because of the Evil Nature of Sin, because it is contrary to God? Is the Bent and Inclination of thy Heart against Sin universally? Dost thou, with *Paul*, bewail the evil Motions of thy Heart? Dost thou, with *Hezekiab*, humble thyself for the Pride of thy Heart? Is *Pride*, Unbelief, Earthliness, and the several Lusts of thy Soul discovered and crucified? Dost thou abhor secret Sins as well as publick? And fear God's Knowledge of thy Sins more than all the Worlds? Dost thou abhor and lament Defects in holy Ordinances, as well as gross Sins, neglects of holy Duties, Luke-warmness and Distractions therein? Dost thou not only oppose Sin in thyself, but set against it in others? Dost thou choose
rather

rather to suffer Affliction with the People of God, than to sin against God? Art thou such an one, that thou canst not sin as others, thou darest not sin, thou hast an Averseness to sin? Dost thou not live in a course of known Sins, thou sinnest not out of Malice, nor makest a Trade of Sin?

4. *O my Soul!* Dost thou perform Duties spiritually? Are thy Motives and Ends spiritual in thy spiritual Actions, such as the Command of God, injoying his Countenance, increase of Grace? &c. Is there Zeal, Fervency, Activity in thy Performance of Duties? Is there in thee a free Inclination to the Duties that God requireth? Are there in thee strong Oppositions and Combats against the Flesh, and unregenerate Part?

5. *O my Soul!* Dost thou love the Brethren? Dost thou love them because of the Image of God in them? Dost thou love them because they are godly? Dost thou love all the Godly, Rich and Poor, High and Low, but them most of all that excel most in Purity and Godliness? Art thou ready and willing to own them as Brethren, and to join with them in Time of Persecution? Hast thou an holy Zeal against Sinners? an Impatience and holy Grief

30 *The Character and Trial*

Grief at the Wickedness of others? Dost thou procure all spiritual Good to the Brethren as thou art able? Dost thou pray for them, exhort them, provoke them to Good? Dost thou bear their Burdens and forbear their Infirmities? And if sometimes thou findest some Envyings, some Impatiencies towards some of the Brethren, (for in the best is Imperfection of Grace) yet is thy Soul troubled at this? Dost thou pray down these Sins in thy Heart? and art thou at no rest till it be *otherwise* with thee? Art thou not ashamed to be call'd one of the Believers, one of the holy Brethren in Time of Persecution?

6. *O my Soul!* Dost thou love Christ? Dost thou evidence this Love by keeping his Commandments, and by accepting of his Rebukes? Is thy Love to Christ strong and lasting, ever-living and continuing Love? Dost thou love him in Sincerity? Cannot many Waters of Affliction quench this thy Love, nor the Floods of Persecution drown it? Is thy Love a transcendent Love surpassing all other Love? Dost the Love of Father, Mother, Wife, Son, Daughter, Brother, Sister, year and of thy own Life also, give place to this Love? Dost Christ sit in the Throne of thy Heart, and do all these sit below at the Foot-stool? Dost thou bear such fer-

Dost thou have warm Affections to Christ, that thou wouldst be content to part with all, rather than part with him? Canst thou say with *David, The Lord is my Portion, and whom have I in Heaven but thee? and whom on Earth that I desire in Comparison of thee?* The World, it may be, will be sometimes creeping into thy Affections, thou canst not be quite free from the Love of the World; yet dost thou, in thy ordinary, settled, prevailing Judgment, and Affections, prefer Christ before all Things in the World? Dost thou make Christ the End of thy Desires, the very Reason why thou hearest and prayest? Dost thou first seek the Kingdom of Christ and his Righteousness? If thou dost not seek it so zealously as thou shouldst, yet hath it the Chief of thy Desires and Endeavours? And is nothing else desired and preferred before it? Is thy Valuation of it so high, that thou wouldst not exchange thy Title to it, and Hopes of God's Acceptance for any Worldly Good whatsoever? Nay, art thou willing to labour and suffer for it; and tho' the Flesh may sometimes shrink or draw back, yet art thou resolved and content to go through all?

7. *O my Soul!* Dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Dost thou find that thou art naturally a lost condemned Creature;

32 *The Character and Trial*

ture; and dost thou believe that Jesus Christ is the Mediator, who hath made a sufficient Satisfaction to the Law; and considering that in the Gospel he is offered without Exception to All, dost thou heartily consent that he, and he alone shall be thy Saviour? Art thou content to take him for thy King, to govern and guide thee by his Laws and Spirit? Art thou willing to obey him, even when he commands the hardest Duties, and those which most cross the Desires of the Flesh? Is it thy Sorrow when thou breakest thy Resolution herein, and thy Joy when thou keepest close in Obedience to him? And tho' the World and Flesh do sometimes entice and over-reach thee, yet is it thy ordinary Desire and Resolution to obey so that thou wouldst not change thy Lord and Master for all the World?

By these things he adviseth to try, and bring our Hearts to answer; suffer them not to be silent, nor to think of other Matters: If any Question be hard, through the Darkness of our Hearts, yet do not give it over, but search the closer, and study the Case the more exactly; and, if it be possible, let not our Hearts give over till we have resolved the Question, and told us off or on in what Case we are; yea, wrestle with thy Heart till thou hast prevailed;

ailed, and say, I will not let thee go till thou hast answered. He that can prevail with his own Heart, shall also be a Prevailer with God.

When we have discovered the Truth of our State, then pass the Sentence accordingly. A meer Examination will do us little good, if we proceed not to a Judgment. Conclude as we find, either we are true Believers, or we are not; either we have a Title to Heaven, or that we have not; but pass not this Sentence with self-Flattery, nor from Melancholy Terrors and Fears.

1st. Not with self-flattery. Alas! what will it profit us to think ourselves the Children of God, when we visibly discover the Power of Sin and Satan in our Lives?

2^{dly}, On the other side pass not this sentence from Melancholy Unbelief, Terrors, and Fears. As the carnal Man fails the former way, so the tempted Christian sometimes fails this way. In this Case run we over our Evidences again and again, and proceed we from those that are more difficult to those that are more easy. One Sign perhaps may be more easily perceived than another; and if we can but discover *some*, yea, if but *one*, we may assuredly gather all the rest are there.

Come then, pass on now to *Sentence*: O, but

but implore the Spirit's Assistance ; now, enten
 ever, let us desire him to shine on our which
 Graces, and then speak groundedly and August
 deilberately, and truly, as we find, accord
 ing to our very Consciences ! Do not con Ha
 clude, as some do, I am a good Christian, Ester
 or as others do, I am a Reprobate, or a hope
 Hypocrite, and shall be damned. When or the
 we have *no ground* for what we say, but nd C
 our own Fancy, or Hopes, or Fears : le Work
 not our Judgment be any way bias'd o Partic
 brib'd from sentencing aright. are a

Then he further adviseth, That we et, i
 should labour to get our Hearts kindly eive
 affected with its discovered Condition can,
 according to the Sentence pass'd on it. Do ed :
 not think enough to *know*, but labour anno
 to *feel* what God hath made us to see, hope
 we find ourselves *renewed* and *sanctified* ma
 indeed. O let us get this warm and close very
 to our Hearts ! bethink ourselves what a be
 blessed Estate hath the Lord brought us not c
 into, to be his Children, his Friends ; to deny
 be pardoned, justified, and entitled to Glor
 Life ! Why ? what is it we now need to some
 fear, but sinning against him ! Come War Hol
 or Plague, or Sickness, or Death, we are will
 sure they can but thrust us into Heaven be b
 Thus let us follow these Meditations till affec
 they have left their Impressions on our tion
 Hearts. Then he adviseth to record this sent

Sentence

entence so passed to write it down,
which now I desire to do this 18th. of
August, 1676.

Having searched and tried my Heart
Yesterday, and at this time also, after I
hope earnest and hearty Prayer to God,
for the help of his Spirit to try my State
and Condition, I did fall again to the
Work of Self-trial by the forementioned
Particulars; and tho' I cannot fully de-
clare a positive Answer to *every Question*,
yet, if my Heart doth not very much de-
ceive me, I can to *most* of them; I hope
can, I beg of God I may not be decei-
ved: It is some Comfort to me, where I
cannot so fully answer some of them; I
hope I can truly say, I most heartily desire
it may be so with me. And tho' Grace be
very weak in me, (which I hope I desire
to be humbled and mourn for) yet I dare
not deny God's Work in me; I must not
deny the Day of small Things, but to the
Glory of God must own, surely there is
something of Good wrought in me by his
Holy Spirit. And my Comfort is, *Christ*
will not quench the smoking Flax, nor break
the bruized Reed, Matt. 12.20. I am not now
affected with the Discovery of my Condi-
tion as I should, and do not find at pre-
sent inward Comfort in my Soul; I am
and

and have been much under the With-
drawings of God for a time, by reason
of my Apostacy and Backslidings from
him, and not walking closely with him;
yet I desire, I hope, *to lament after the Lord*
and not content myself, till I again meet
with him. The Lord give me Grace to
wait on him in a way of Duty, and to accept
Grace, tho' I want Comfort. O if I am
but sincere, and wait still upon God, who
can tell but he may return with Comfort
to my poor Soul! The Lord help me to
maintain Faith and Hope through Christ,
Tho' I sit in Darknes and see no Light, yet
to trust in the Lord and stay my self on my
God, Isa. 50. 10. The Lord help me now
to walk answerable to the great Things
he hath done for my poor Soul. I desire
and hope I may have recourse to this here-
after, as I shall have need: And that it
may be of Comfort to me for the time to
come, as Mr. *Ambrose* adviseth: His Words
are; This Record will be very useful to
us hereafter: If we find we have a Work
of Grace in us, what a help will it be a-
gainst the next Temptation to doubting
and fear, to go and read under our Hands
this Record? May we not think, if at
such a time I found the truth of Grace, is
it not likely to be now the same, and these
Doubts to come from the Enemy of my
Peace?

Peace? Yet trust not so to *one Discovery* as to try no more: Especially if we have made any foul Defections from Christ, and play'd the Backsliders, see then that we renew the Search again: Neither let this hinder us in the daily Search of our Ways, or of our Increase in Grace, and Fellowship with Christ. It is an ill Sign; and a desperate vile Sin, for a Man, when he thinks he hath found himself gracious, and in a happy State, to let down his Watch, and grow negligent of his Heart and Ways, and scarce look after them any more. Neither should we give over in Discouragement, if we cannot at once or twice, or ten times trying, discover our Case, but follow it on till we have discovered it; if one Hour or Day will not do, take another; if one Minister cannot direct us sufficiently, go to another; the Issue will answer all our Pains. There is no sitting down discouraged in a Work that must be done. If we have been Hypocrites, or ungodly Persons all our Lives, yet is the Promise offered to us by Christ, and he tenders himself to us, to be our Lord and Sayiour; *neither can we possibly be so willing to accept him, as he is to accept us.* Nothing but our own Unwillingness can keep our Souls from Christ, tho' we have hitherto abused him, and dissembled w

38 *The Character and Trial*

him. O that the Lord would perswade us to the close Performance of this self-trying Task, that we might not tremble with Horror of Soul when the Judge of all the World shall try us ; but have our Evidencies so ready at hand, and be so able to prove our Title to Heaven, that the Thoughts and Approach of Death and Judgment might revive our Spirits, and fill us with Joy, and not *terrify* us, and fill us with Amazement.

September the 19th. 1676. Finding my Heart very hard and dead of late, and being still under the Withdrawings of God, but I bless God, I hope sensible of it, and desirous to wait upon him for Discoveries of his Love and Favour, and to lament after him, and seek him in his Ordinances : (for I hope I cannot take up with Duty without something of God in it, at least some Quicknings and Drawings out of my Heart after him in earnest Desires, and Longings, and Pantings after him) yet I am apt to be cast down, my Conscience is apt to accuse me, that I do not my Duty, and am fearful lest Death come of a *Sudden*, and find me unready, and thereupon am greatly troubled ; and not knowing what to do, methinks I would not be tarrying in my Duty, and often pray that
God

God would shew me my Duty; and help me to do it ; yet when I think to go about any thing, there comes such a multitude of things into my Mind, to do this, and to do the other, (and all cannot be done together) that I am sometimes almost discouraged, and tempted to let all alone. The Lord in infinite Mercy look upon me for Christ's sake, and help me against this Temptation of Satan, and my own wicked Heart, and enable me to remember the Lord is gracious and merciful and accepts of the willing Mind, where there is Truth and Sincerity. The Lord help me also to remember, and believe, tho' I must be doing, yet I am not justified for it, if I could do never so much. The Lord help me to renounce all, and trust wholly to Jesus Christ for Acceptance, for Justification, and Salvation. Now this Morning being in my Shop, and having nothing to do, (Trading being very dead) I thought with myself what to set about ; and tho' I have examined myself before, yet knowing I cannot be too much in this Work, I resolved to go to it again ; and altho' I cannot so solemnly search my Heart, as if I were in secret, yet I hope I find something of Mr. *Nalton's* Characters, which I shall here note.

Question. How may we know Christ is ours, and we are his ? D 2 *Ans.*

40 *The Character and Trial*

Ans. 1. Do you highly prize Jesus Christ?

2. Are you made new Creatures?

2. Do you find the Power of Corruption in some measure abated in you?

3. Are you desirous to have Christ rule over you as well as save you?

5. Dost thou lament after the Lord, and mourn over a crucified *Saviour*?

6. Do you feel Sin a Burden, and would you willingly be rid of it?

Quest. How may I know I love Christ?

Ans. 1. If you love Jesus Christ, you will be content with nothing but his Love again: All the World will not content you without the Love of Christ.

2. If you love Jesus Christ, you will delight to think and speak of Christ.

3. If you love Christ, you will be afraid to offend him.

4. You will love the Saints and Followers of Christ.

5. You will delight to be where Christ is, in his Ordinances; and rejoice in his Presence when you meet with him.

6. Love to Christ will make you seek the Honour of Christ.

7. Your Lives will run out in lively actings and exercise of Grace upon Christ.

8. If you love Christ, you will not think any thing too much to do for Christ,

or

or to part with him. *If you love me, keep my Commandments*, saith Christ; so that if I keep Christ's Commandments, it is a Sign that I love him.

Now follow *some Characters* that Mr. Nalton laid down of *true Faith in Jesus Christ*; but before these he gives some Rules to help us in trying ourselves. 1. If you would judge aright of your *Faith*, be sure you do not trust to your own Hearts. 2. Examine your Hearts when you are in a calm, quiet, composed Frame. 3. Take heed you do not err in the nature of Faith, to think there is *no true Faith* where there is *no Assurance*. 4. Judge not of your Faith by some legal Troubles that have been in your Spirits as a fore runner of Faith; but judge by the Consequents of the Troubles, whether they bring Christ and your Souls nearer together. 5. Though you must judge your Faith by *the Fruits* of it, yet they are in some of a higher degree, some of a lower degree. Joy in Tribulation is a high Fruit of Faith that every Man cannot attain unto. Let not a Man say, I have no Faith, because I cannot sing in a Prison; but if there be but any Fruit of Faith, that discovers to thee thou art a *Believer*, tho' not a *strong Believer*, thou hast cause to rejoice.

Now I hope my Desire is to try myself by these Marks of *true Faith* following. The Lord grant I may find them in my Soul for Christ's sake.

1st. True Faith may be known by the efficient or principal Cause of it, which is no other but the holy Spirit of God. All the Angels in Heaven, and Saints on Earth, cannot perswade my Heart to believe, till the Spirit of God draw my Soul to Jesus Christ. *Now* hath the Spirit of God drawn thee to Christ? Have you found the mighty Power of the Spirit of God overcoming the Pride and Stubbornness of your Will, to make you willing to accept of Christ on his own Terms? Then you have a true Faith.

2dly, True Faith may be known by the manner of Production, the Spirit of God hath a previous, or foregoing Work upon the Soul. 1. The Spirit of God *convinces* the Sinner; this goes before believing, the Spirit of God lets a Sinner see the inside of himself. Thou art a Sinner, saith the Spirit of God; so that the poor Sinner sees himself in a lost and undone Condition in himself by reason of Sin. 2. After convincing, the Spirit of God *humbles* the Sinner; he is humbled to the Dust. This Sorrow and Humiliation is in some more, in some less; but in all there is so much

much Sense of Sin and Misery, as to drive the Sinner out of himself, and to let him see he must perish for ever without Christ.

3. There is also an *incouraging Work* of the Spirit of God ; having convinced and humbled the Sinner, he revives him by some Heart-cheering Considerations ; as,
 (1.) That there is a Christ, an All-sufficient Saviour, by whom he may be delivered from Wrath to come. (2.) The Spirit of God makes a particular Proffer of Christ, and Pardon, and Grace to him, and tells him the Promises of the Gospel are made to him, as well as others ; and that God invites him, poor Sinner, and that there is Mercy for him if he accept it.
 (3.) The Spirit of God doth sometimes secretly whisper to the Soul of a Sinner, by a Voice within him, inviting him and drawing him to come to Christ : *Come to me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest : Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the Waters.* Art thou a thirsty Soul ? Thou art he that is invited, saith the Spirit of God ; therefore stand out no longer. (4.) The Spirit of God doth work Faith by bowing the Will, making it pliable, to come and taste how good Christ is. Well saith the Soul, I am resolved to come to Christ, tho' I know not how I shall speed. I will cast my Soul into

44 *The Character and Trial*

the Arms of Christ; and if I sink, I will sink with a Saviour in my Arms; I will live or die with him. Now deal truly with your Souls, hath the Spirit of God wrought Faith in you in this manner?

3^{dly}, You may know the Truth of Faith by its vital Act, which is *an hearty Consent to receive Christ*: It is a Conjugal Consent that makes your Faith a true Faith. 1. That is, when the Sinner hath regard to his Person as well as his Portion. 2. When we receive him to be our Lord and Husband; to be ruled by him as well as to be redeemed by him. 3. It excludes all other Partners, I will have Christ and none but Christ; if I have him, I have enough. 4. It includes all Conditions. I am content to be his in Want as well as in Wealth, in Adversity as well as Prosperity, in Temptation as well as Consolation; I am content to follow him through Dirt, and Mire, and Blood. 5. Such a Man yields to Christ out of Choice; a Man willingly yields to Christ, he can say, I am thine wholly; I have made *Choice* of thee to be my Portion, my Redeemer.

4^{thly}, True Faith may be known by the *Fruits* of it: Some Fruits in reference to Christ, some in reference to ourselves. The Fruits in reference to *Christ* are these.

1. True

1. True Faith will make you highly to prize *Jesus Christ*. You will set such a Price upon *Christ*, that all the Beauty, and Bravery, and Pomp, and Glory of the World, all the Pleasures and Treasures in the World will be but a heap of Dung in comparison of him. The Person of *Christ* is exceeding precious, *Cant. 5. 10.* *My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest of ten thousand ; his Mouth is Sweetnesses, he is altogether lovely :* His Blood is very precious, his Offices very precious, his Graces very precious, an Interest in him is very precious : The Purchase of his Blood very precious ; the Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away, is very precious ; all the Kingdoms of the World are not worthy to be compared to it.

2. True Faith will work *earnest, fervent, regular Desires after Christ*, and Communion with him. This is certain, where Faith is once wrought, the Soul is restless, till it rests in a Saviour. These *Desires after Christ* may be known by four Properties. (1.) By the *Ardency* of them ; they are not weak and slight Desires, but commanding Desires, like the Desires of Hunger and Thirst, that must be satisfied. Tell the Soul who desires *Christ*, that he shall have the World and Riches enough. No, saith he, that will not content me ;

give me *Christ*, or else I die. Tell him of outward Comforts and Accommodations; These are not *Christ*, saith he. (2.) By the Activity of them: These Desires will not be sluggish, lazy Desires, to look that *Christ* should drop into their Mouths without looking after him. But if you desire *Christ* indeed, you will earnestly seek him, as a Man that is hungry indeed, will be ready to break through any Difficulties for Food. (3.) By the Prevalency of them. They will be prevalent and powerful Desires; they will make thee content to part with something for *Christ*. When *Christ* saith, I would have thee leave such a Lust: With all my Heart, saith the Soul. When *Christ* saith, Follow me in any hard Duty, as the Duty of *Self-denial*: With all my Heart, saith the Soul. *Moses* was content to part with all his Preferment for *Christ*; he counted the Reproach of *Christ* greater Riches than the Treasures of *Egypt*. (4.) By the Constancy of them. If your Desires are right, you will still be desiring more of *Christ*; you will never be so satisfied; as to say you have enough of him, but be hungring and thirsting still: *Psal.* 119. 20. *My Soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy Judgments at all times.* A Man that hath tasted of the

Sweet-

Sweetness of *Christ* ; O that I might taste more, saith he ! There is a thousand times more Sweetness in *Christ* than ever yet you tasted. He that saith he knows *Christ* so much, that he desires to know no more, I dare say he never tasted the Sweetness of *Christ* at all : For the more you have experienc'd, the more you will hunger after him, and desire him.

3. Another Fruit of Faith in reference to *Christ* is this, **It** will work an earnest, fervent *Love to Christ* ; so that a Believer will love *Jesus Christ* above all things, and say, *Thy Loves are better than Wine*, Can. 1. 2. It is said the Loadstone will not draw Iron in the Presence of the Diamond, so no outward Loadstone of Pleasure and Contentment can draw the Soul in the Presence of the Lord *Jesus Christ*. When a Worldly Man doth boast, These are my Lands, and Houses, and Enjoyments : A Believer saith, All my Pleasures, and Riches, and Jewels, are in *Jesus Christ*. As *Mephibosheth* said, 2 *Kings* 19. 30. *Let him take all, for as much as I have seen the Face of my Lord the King* : So saith a true Believer, Let worldly Men take all, so I may see the Face of my Lord the King of Saints. When a Believer can draw out the Quintessence of all Creature Comforts, and say the Sweetness of all is in *Christ* ;

48 *The Character and Trial*

Christ; O how sweet is he then to that Soul

Again: This true Faith will make a Man love Christ under all Difficulties and Temptations, and Discouragements he can meet with in Heaven's way. What tho' I suffer Reproach for Christ, saith the Believer, yet I can love him still; nay, tho' I suffer the Loss of all my Estate for Christ, yet I can love him still; nay tho' I suffer the Loss of my Life for Christ yet I will love him still. *Acts 21. 13.*

I am ready not only to be bound, but to die for the Name of Christ. This I confess is a high Act of Faith, but no higher than many Martyrs have attained to: They felt such a strong and unquenchable Love in *Jesus Christ* to their Souls; therefore their Love was so drawn out to Christ again, which made them ready to suffer and lay down their Lives for him.

Again: True Faith will make a Man love *Christ* without outward Encouragements. A Believer can say, What tho' I want these outward Accommodations others have, tho' I be as poor as *Job* on the Dunghil, yet a *naked Christ* is to me more welcome than a beautiful World that is deck'd with all the Plenty and Prosperity that can be imagined. As the strongest Believer, he that hath Assurance of *Christ's* Love, may love *Christ* more

strongly

strongly; yet it is as true, he that is the weakest believer, tho' he knows not whether he be beloved of *Christ*, he loves *Christ* as *truly* as the other.

4. Another Fruit of Faith, is a *Fear of offending him*. True Faith would *not* have *Christ* displeased; it is true, Faith casts out a slavish Fear; but a Fear of Reverence and Watchfulness is the Fruit of True Saving Faith.

5. True Faith will work *Holiness* and *new Obedience*. Hence Faith is called a *most Holy Faith*, because it makes us holy; we are sanctified by Faith.

6. True Faith works *Patience*; not only Patience in waiting, but Patience in suffering: There is a Patience in waiting for the Accomplishment of the Promises. Faith saith to a Believer, The Things thou waitest for are worth thy waiting for; the Comforts thou desirest, the Crown of Glory thou expectest, is worth waiting for. Again, Faith works Patience in Suffering, *Heb. 10. 34. They took joyfully the spoiling of their Goods, knowing they had in Heaven a more enduring Substance. Heb. 11. 36. 37. They endured the Trial of cruel Mockings, of Scourgings, of Bonds, and Imprisonments: They were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, slain with the Sword; they wandered about in Sheep-*
skins,

50 *The Character and Trial*

skins, and Goat-skins, being destitute, forsaken, tormented; and yet their Faith in Jesus Christ carried them through all these Sufferings. Faith tells the Soul, The Sufferings of this present Life, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed.

7. True Faith will work an undaunted Profession of Christ's Name. He will profess Christ openly, when called to it. The Disciples professed Christ when it was Death to do so. *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, saith the Apostle: I esteem the Reproach of Christ better than the Glory of the World; and the Cross of Christ better than the Crowns of the World: I esteem his Crown of Thorns better than all others in this World. I bear about me the Marks of the Lord Jesus, Gal. 6. 17. he calls his Sorrows and Sufferings the Marks of Christ; I esteem them my greatest Honour: God forbid, saith he, I should glory in any thing but in the Cross of Jesus Christ.* Thus you see what Fruits Faith works in reference to Jesus Christ.

Now there are Fruits of Faith in reference to ourselves, as these following.

1. True Faith works abundance of inward Peace and Joy: Rom. 5. 1. *Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God.* And it must needs be so, because that
Faith

Faith tells the Soul the Bond is cancelled, that Sin is pardoned, the Burden is taken off, Wounds of Conscience are healed with the Wounds of *Christ*. A Believer can say, In Peace will I lay down my Head in the Bosom of *Christ*. When Storms and Waves arise, a Believer can sit in his Ark ; *Christ* and a good Conscience in his Ark for a poor Soul, where he is safe. A true Believer hath always the *Ground of Joy*, tho' not always the *Exercise* of it.

2. Another Fruit of Faith in reference to ourselves, is *Boldness in coming to the Throne of Grace* : We have Boldness and Access by Faith in *Christ*, *Ephes. 3. 12* : A true Believer can pour out his Soul to God, make his Moan to his Father. It is his Comfort he can go to his Father with a Child-like Boldness and Confidence.

3. Another Fruit of Faith is *Contempt of the World*, *Acts 4. They sold their Possessions, and brought the Money, and laid it down at the Apostles Feet* : They regarded it no more than the Dirt under their Feet. Faith hath an Eagle's Eye, it sees things afar off ; and an Eagle's Wing, to carry a Man above the Flatteries and the Frowns of the World. By Faith *Moses feared not the Frowns of the King*, *Heb. 11.*

52 *The Character and Trial*

17. Faith lets a Man see there is better to be found in *Christ* than in the whole World. He that can find a World in *Christ*, will be willing to part with all the World for him.

4. True Faith will produce a strong Desire of strengthening and encreasing it, and that both in *Truth* and *Growth*. It will make a Man still be searching his Heart, that he may be sure he hath the *Truth* of Faith. It makes a Man prize a Soul-searching Ministry, that may plough up the Fallow Ground of his Heart: And it works a Desire of Growth also; it makes a Believer pray: *Lord, encrease my Faith*, whether thou encrease my Trade and Wealth, or no; however, *Lord, encrease my Faith*.

After I had wrote these Things, I went into my Closet, and there begged of God his Help and Assistance to try myself by these Characters, and then spent a little time going over them, and trying my State by them; and, I bless the Lord, I now cannot but say, to his Glory, that I find them in some measure in me. I hope that those I could not so positively answer to, yet I could in the Desire of my Soul: I hope in the Lord I am not deceived. If I am, I seeck him for Christ's sake, to undeceive

me, and let me know how it is with me :
 But methinks God hath begun some good
 Work in me, and wrought Faith in my poor
 Soul, though it is very weak. The Lord
 humble me, and the Lord help me to bless
 his holy Name for the least Grace ; and
 earnestly to endeavour and beg of him the
 Increase of it. I hope in the Lord I may
 have recourse to what I have done this
 Day (and what is entered before) in a
 Time of Doubts and Fears, in an Hour
 of Trouble, under God's Withdrawings ;
 yea, that I may have Comfort from it in
 an Hour of Death. The Lord grant I
 may not now be secure and careless, but
 that I may walk very closely and exactly
 before him, to his Praise and Glory here,
 till at last I come to live with him in his
 Heavenly Kingdom.

May the 9th. 1678. I spent the Day in
 a Secret Fast. One End, among others,
 I proposed to myself in it, was, to search
 into the State of my Soul again ; also that
 I may be inabled to suffer for Christ, if I
 am called to it, &c.

I hope I desired to be sincere and hear-
 ty, I tried myself by the Marks and Cha-
 racters before set down : I hope I can say,
 upon Search, that the Lord hath wrought
 saving Grace in me ; it was, I hope, my
 hearty

54 *The Character and Trial*

heartly Prayer, that if it was not so, I might not so enter it here ; but I trust the Lord hath turned me from Darkneis to Light, and that I am not dead in Sins and Trespases, but there is a Principle of Life in me ; the Lord grant I may not be deceived. Towards the close of the Day I read over my *Covenant*, and hope I did from my very Heart desire to bewail the Breach of it, and renew it with the Lord ; which I did, I hope, in the Strength of his Grace : desiring Christ may be my Surety, being much affraid of my being deceived, lest it should be with me as heretofore. I hope I did heartily take the Lord for my God, and give up myself unto him ; and bind myself to forsake all Sin, and to live more to his Glory, according to the Covenant I entered into with the Lord about eleven Years since, (*taken out of Mr. Allen's Book.*) I bless God I was assisted to Day in the Work I undertook ? the Lord accept of me thro' Christ, and let not this Day be lost. O that I may not prove false and hypocritical with him ! but go away enabled to live more to his Praise here, till I come to be for ever with him hereafter.

January the 30th. 1682. I spent this Day in a Secret Fast in my Closet ; the

main

main End I proposed to myself, was, to search again my Heart, to find out whether there was a Work of Grace wrought in me, or no ; also, that I might get Corruption more subdued, that is yet strong in me ; and that I may be inabled to suffer for Christ, if I am called to it, &c. I hope I desired to be hearty in the Work, tho' Hardness and Deadness was too much upon me. The Lord forgive ; I hope I may say, to the Glory of God, that he hath begun that good Work in me, that he will perfect to the Day of Christ : I did earnestly beg of the Lord that I might not be deceived, and hope I am not. I trust the Lord hath pluck'd me out of a Natural Estate, and turned my heart from Sin unto himself. The Lord grant I may now live answerable to the great things he hath done for me, and keep the Covenant I have this Day renewed.

January the 30th. 1684. I kept as a Fast and spent a good part of the Morning in Secret Prayer : After Family-Duty, I went to hear a Sermon, and then back to my Closet, where I spent the rest of the Day. The Ends I proposed to myself were, That God would help me against Worldliness, and distrust of his Providence (for I have been much troubled of late by reason of many

56 *The Character and Trial*

many Losses, and Trade being fallen almost to nothing) and quiet my Mind, and enable me to trust him, and withal, direct me how to proceed as to Earthly Things; having some Thoughts of leaving this House. And I desired also to be fitted for the Lord's Supper, and that I might have strength to suffer whatever God should call me to. And in reference to the Publick, I desired to seek God for Mercy to his Church, and to these Nations.

I began with reading some Portion of God's Word, then examined myself of the State of my Soul, by some Characters of Grace in this Book. I hope I desired heartily the Help of God, and earnestly begg'd I might give a right Judgment of myself, and was afraid of doing otherwise. I hope I may say to God's Glory, Surely there is somewhat of a Work of Grace that he hath graciously wrought in my Soul, and that I am not dead in Trespases and Sins. Blessed, O blessed, be his Name!

I am not affected, as I ought, but am apt to fear still, knowing my Heart is deceitful. The Lord help me to be much in this trying Work; for I cannot make too sure of my Salvation. The Lord remove Doubts and Fears, and strengthen my

my Faith in him and in his Promises. After *Self-examination*, I spent the rest of my Time in *Prayer*, and hope I was hearty therein. The Lord hear my poor Prayers for myself, for my Children, and for the Publick. I also read over *my Covenant*, entered into with the Lord many Years since, and I renewed Covenant with God. The Lord help me to live answerably; and that Sin may be more subdued, and Grace strengthened; that I may find the Benefit of this Day, while I live and be fitted for the everlasting Enjoyment of God in Glory.

February the 6th. 1685. I kept a Fast by myself. The main thing I had upon my Heart, was the low Estate of the Church, and of these Nations; as also to search into the State of my Soul, to get my Heart more taken off the World, to have Corruption mortified, and be enabled to suffer for Christ, if called to it, and never to forsake him. I bless God, I had his Assistance, and hope I was hearty in the Work; and that upon Trial I may say, God hath begun a good Work, which he will carry on and perfect to the Day of Jesus Christ. O that I might make more sure of Christ, and Grace, and Heaven! especially when I can make sure of nothing

58 *The Character and Trial*

nothing below, but am at such Uncertainties as to all outward things. The Lord help me to live in some measure answerable to his great Mercies, and to keep the Covenant with him that I have this Day renewed.

Things whereby a Man may examine and judge of himself. 1. If you would be saved, you must by deep and serious Repentance forsake the World and Sin, and turn to God in Christ, and firmly believe in him. 2. You must resign and devote yourself to be the Lord's. 3. You must take the Favour of God for your Happiness. 4. You must be diligent in the Use of all holy Means and Duties. 5. You must study the Scriptures, to know God's Mind, and to do it. The whole Course of your Lives will be set to please and honour God. Now examine whether you are like to be saved. How is it, my Soul, as to these things? Do I go the broad Way, or not? Let not the Devil keep you from this Self-Examination; if he can prevail for that, you may make a great Profession, and do many things, and yet perish for ever.

Judge of thyself by these things, and seriously enquire; 1. Whether Eternal Salvation have the Preheminence of you

Esteem

Esteem and Choice, that you prefer it before all Worldly Prosperity? 2. Is the obtaining of this Salvation, and preparing for it, the great Business of your Lives? 3. Under the Sense of Sin, do you give up yourselves to Christ, as the only Physician of Souls, to heal, and help, and save you? 4. Is it the sincere Desire of your Souls, that you may be saved from Sin, as well as Hell? From the Power and Practice of Sin, as well as from the Wrath of God? 5. What is the Matter of thy Comfort? Is it to converse with God? To look up to him with Hope of his Acceptance? Doth the Light of God's Countenance give thee more Joy than the Increase of Riches? Canst thou say from thy Heart, thou hadst rather be poor, and despised, and miserable in this World, with God's Favour, than to be the greatest Person in the World, and God to be thine Enemy? Examine by such Things as these.

O let me be earnest for Christ and Grace, and never rest till it be put out of Doubt, that God in Christ is my God, and that he hath made an everlasting Covenant with me! If this be not, I am undone for ever! But this I must obtain, or my Soul shall be in Bitterness before the Lord

Lord while I have a Being! Nothing shall comfort me while I am Graceless and without Christ! I am resolved for Him, his Grace and Favour against all Denials. If God will not let me see the Good of his Chosen, and reveal his Christ and Grace in me, *I will mourn, I will mourn*, while I live! If God will not comfort me, nothing else shall! If I may not find Rest and Peace in Christ, I will have none at all! If God will take no Pleasure in me, I will take none in myself! My Tears shall be my Meat continually! I will go mourning in this World, while I have Day to live, till Christ shall please to cast an Eye of Grace and Mercy on me. Nay, let it come to this, *I cannot live* if God be not reconciled! If Christ be not mine, my Spirit fails! If the Lord do not relieve me, unless he speak a Word of Peace! When the Soul is brought to this I must have an Interest in Christ, or nothing will satisfy me; such an one shall find Acceptance: Therefore be, in good earnest, and let the Desires of *thy* Soul rise up to an holy Restlessness. O wretched Negligence, that we can let the greatest Concerns of our Souls lie at Hazard at our Days!

Ten Questions to ask our Hearts. Thus Mr. *Steel* advis'd we should often commune with our Hearts. I. What have I been, if now I am changed? I was a wretched Sinner! II. What Good have I done, that God may have the Glory, and I the Comfort? III. How have I done it? IV. What have I neglected? The slothful Servant is condemned, who had Talents, but did no good with them. What Duties have I neglected, and how many Opportunities of doing good omitted? V. What State am I in? Am I in a gracious or sinful State, in Christ, or in my Sins? If I am in Christ, he rules; if in Sin, that reigns. VI. What Frame am I in? Am I in a gracious or worldly Frame of Heart? VII. What do I? Am I in my Calling, and in the way of my Duty? Am I now doing the Will of God? VIII. Whither am I going? Towards Heaven or Hell? Every Moment I take a Step to one of them. IX. How far am I on my Way to Heaven? X. What shall I do to be saved? Salvation is to be had, how shall I attain it?

62. The Character and Trial

His Covenant with God.

O Most Dreadful God! for the Passion of thy Son, I beseech Thee accept of thy poor Prodigal, now prostrating himself at thy Door: I have fallen from Thee by mine Iniquity, and am by Nature a Son of Death, and a thousandfold more the Child of Hell by my wicked Practice; but of thine Infinite Grace Thou hast promised Mercy to me in Christ, if I will but turn to thee with all my Heart! Therefore, upon the Call of thy Gospel, I am now come in, and, throwing down my Weapons, submit myself to thy Mercy! And because thou requirest, as the Condition of my Peace with thee, that I should put away mine Idols, and be at Defiance with all thine Enemies, which I acknowledge I have wickedly sided with against thee; I here, from the bottom of my Heart, renounce them all, firmly Covenanting with thee, Not to allow myself in any known Sin, but to use conscientiously all the Means that I know thou hast prescribed, for the Death and utter Destruction of all my Corruptions. And whereas I have formerly inordinately and idolatrously let out my Affections upon the World, I do here resign my Heart to thee that mad'st it, humbly protesting before thy Glorious Majesty, that it is the firm Resolution of my Heart, and
that

that I do unfeignedly desire Grace from thee ; that when thou shalt call me hereunto, I may practise this my Resolution, through thy Assistance, to forsake all that is dear unto me in this World, rather than to turn from thee to the Ways of Sin ; and that I will watch against all its Temptations, whether of Prosperity or Adversity, lest they should withdraw my Heart from thee ; beseeching thee also to help me against the Temptations of Satan, to whose wicked Suggestions I resolve, by thy Grace, never to yield myself a Servant. And because my own Righteousness is but menstrous Rags, I renounce all Confidence therein, and acknowledge that I am of myself a hopeless, helpless, undone Creature, without Righteousness or Strength.

And for as much as thou hast of thy bottomless Mercy offered most graciously to me, wretched Sinner ! to be again my God, thro' Christ, if I would accept of thee ; I call Heaven and Earth to record this Day, that I do here solemnly avouch thee for the Lord my God ; and with all possible Veneration, bowing the Neck of my Soul under the Feet of thy most Sacred Majesty. I do here take Thee the Lord Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for my Portion and Chief Good ; and do give up myself, Body and Soul, for thy Servant, promising and avowing to serve thee in Holiness and Righteousness all the

64 *The Character and Trial*

Days of my Life. And since thou hast appointed the Lord Jesus Christ the only Means of coming unto thee, I do here, upon the bended Knees of my Soul, accept of him as the only new and living Way, by which Sinners may have Access to thee, and do here solemnly join myself in a Marriag-Covenant to him.

O blessed Jesus! I come to thee hungry and hardly bestead, poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked; a most loathsome polluted Wretch, a guilty condemned Malefactor, unworthy for ever to wash the Feet of a Servant of my Lord, much more to be solemnly married to the King of Glory: But sith such is thine unparallel'd Love, I do here, with all my Power, accept thee, and do take thee for my Head and Husband, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, for all Times and Conditions, to love, and honour, and obey thee before all others, and this to the Death. I embrace thee in all thine Office; I renounce my own Worthiness, and do here avow thee for the Lord my Righteousness; I renounce my own Wisdom, and do here take thee for my only Guide; I renounce my own Will, and take thy Will for my Law. And since thou hast told me that I must suffer if I will reign, I do here Covenant with thee to take my Lot as it falls with thee, and by thy Grace assisting, to run all Hazards with thee, verily purposing, that neither Life nor Death shall part between thee and me. And

And because thou hast been pleased to give me thy holy Laws, as the Rule of my Life, and the Way in which I should walk to thy Kingdom; I do here willingly put my Neck under thy Yoke, and set my Shoulder to thy Burden; and subscribing to all thy Laws, as holy, just, and good, I solemnly take them as the Rule of my Words, Thoughts, and Actions, promising, that tho' my Flesh contradict and rebel, yet I will endeavour to order and govern my whole Life according to thy Direction, and will not allow myself in the Neglect of any thing that I know to be my Duty: Only because, thro' the Frailty of my Flesh, I am subject to many Failings, I am bold humbly to protest, that unallowed Miscarriages, contrary to the settled Bent and Resolution of my Heart, shall not make void this Covenant; for so thou hast said.

Now Almighty God, Searcher of all Hearts, thou knowest that I make this Covenant with thee this Day, without any known Guile or Reservation, beseeching thee, That if thou espieest any Flaw or Falshood therein, thou wouldst discover it to me, and help me to do it aright.

And now Glory be to thee, O God the Father, whom I shall behold, from this Day forward, to look upon as my God and Father, that ever thou shouldst find out such a Way for the Recovery of undone Sinners! Glory

be to thee, O God the Son, who hast loved me, and washed me from my Sins in thy own Blood, and art now become my Saviour and Redeemer! Glory be to thee, O God the Holy Ghost, who, by the Finger of thine Almighty Power, hast turned about my Heart from Sin to God.

O Dreadful Jehovah! the Lord God Omnipotent, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, thou art now become my Covenant-Friend, and I, through thine infinite Grace, am become thy Covenant-Servant. Amen: So be it. And the Covenant which I have made on Earth, let it be ratified in Heaven.

April 11.

1667.

HENRY GEARING.

A Pathetical Meditation on the Passion of Christ, taken out of Mr. Wadsworth's Remains, 8vo. abridged and transcribed for his own Use, upon Sacramental Occasions.

A Way all trifling Worldly Business,
I must go see my bleeding Lord!
Come now, my Soul, look yonder, thou
wilt soon arrive at bloody Golgotha, where
thou shalt see thy bleeding dying Saviour
to sigh and linger out a dying Life on the
Cross, in Love for thee! This, this might,
O my

O my Sould, have been thy Day in which
 thou migh'ſt have drunk the bitter Cup
 of the fierce Anger of God! But look
 yonder, there he goes that muſt drink up
 the Dregs and all for thee! But come, my
 Soul, draw up a little nearer, ſtand here,
 and thou wilt ſee him paſſing: Look! there
 he goes with a Train of Virgins follow-
 ing: But ſee how cruelly theſe barbarous
 Jews do uſe him, they make him bear his
 Croſs himſelf! See how they laugh, and
 ſcoff, and wag their Heads, as if he were
 their May game! Look! ſee, my Soul,
 come, tell me what thou ſeeſt. O I cannot,
 Sorrow ties my Tongue, I cannot ſpeak;
 I ſee a Troop of Virgins following him,
 their weeping Eyes, their blubbering Lips,
 their Sighs and Throbbings ſpeak them
 Mourners! I ſee my Lord looks towards
 them, and kindly chides their loving Sor-
 row; *Weep not for me!* Ay, could they
 do leſs than weep to ſee thine innocent
 Self among a Herd of Tygers? But whi-
 ther, O whither, O ye blinded Jews, are
 ye dragging this my Lord! My Spirit be-
 gins to faint, I now can look no longer;
 my Heart now begins to ſwell with Grief,
 it muſt now break, or I muſt vent it at
 my Eyes Streams. Look! ſee the Ham-
 mer and Nails, the Hammer liſt up to
 ſtrike: Bloody Man, thou durſt not ſtrike

68 *The Character and Trial*

sure! Surely thou dost not know whose Hands and Feet thou art now piercing, it is the Prince and Saviour of the World! But look, see, it is done! The Nails are driven to the Head; see how the Blood runs trickling down his Hands and Feet; and see how hardened Hearts are laughing at it! O silly foolish blinded Men, what laugh yet! See; this very Christ you now mock shall be your Judge! But come again, look and see, my Soul, what is become of thy nailed and crucified Lord! Ah me! he is not quite dead; look how he gasps and pants for Life! O how pale and wan do I see his Cheeks! methinks he should be dead; for see how weak his Neck is grown, that it is not able to support his Head that lies a dying on his bleeding Breast. What yet not dead! See how he shakes and stirs his dying Limbs! What Gasps and Groans do I here him fetch! Hark, hark, he speaks! O let me catch the last Breath of my dying Saviour! What saith my Lord? What? *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* He hath been all this while a drinking up the Cup his Father gave him; the bitter, sour Cup of his Father's Wrath, which I and all the World had else drank. But must he endure all this? Must he be crowned with Thorns and sweat, and bleed,

bleed, and die, and all *for me*? This I stand amazed at! But there was Necessity for all this; either he must be thus dealt with, or else my Sins could not be pardoned: He must drink up this bitter Cup, with all its Dregs, or else I must have drunk it up myself. It was I that sinned, and must have suffered. This cursed, proud, and earthly Heart of mine rebelled, and broke the Laws, and should have suffered and born the Punishment. Had not he slept in, and born the Stroak off from me, I had been now burning in everlasting Flames, and been lingring out this Time in Torments, which I am now spending in the sweet Thoughts of my Escape. Hath not the Prophet said all this in *I/a. 53.* these *Wounds, Stripes, Bruises,* he bore for thee; O amazing Love and Grace, the Son of God loved me better than his Life! Was ever Love like to his Love? He was a Stranger to me; Why did he not let me die? But he loved me: I was a polluted Sinner, methinks he should have loathed me, but he did wash me and make me clean again. But why did he love an Enemy? Or how could he do it? I know not why; O inexpressible Love! O Love past Thoughts! He Loves because he will Love! What ails my Heart, I cannot find it stir? What! dead under the

reviving. Thoughts of thy dearest Redeemer! Arise, shake up thyself and look about thee, thou dost not sure see thy Mercy! Come away, O come away, lift up thy drowsie Head, I will make thee look and love, and e'er I leave thee, confess thou lovest him! Suppose now, for thy Sins, the Vengeance of God was just seizing upon thee, turning thee into Hell, and Christ comes and reveals himself to thee. *Sinner*, I love thee! I say thou shalt not die; Come, feel my Heart how it beats towards thee! Dost thou not see I have left my Throne, and am come down to the Bar, where thou standest condemned? But why dost thou weep? Come, let me wipe thine Eyes, and bind up thy bleeding and despairing Heart! I tell thee thou shalt not die. If Heaven will have Blood, it shall have mine, so it will but spare thine! Now the Soul hath not a Word to speak against this Love. Thy Son, O God, hath offered Satisfaction, and thou hast accepted it. Thou, O my Saviour, hast laid down thy Life for mine, and thy Father and my Father is well pleased with it. Blood is paid, Justice is satisfied, Heaven's Doors are widened, thine Arms opened to receive me, nothing is wanting but my Heart; make it such as thou wilt have it, and then take

it to thyself ! Come, *my Soul*, the Father thou seest is willing, and the Son is willing, give but thy Consent and he is thine for ever : Fear not thy Hardness, Deadness, Blindness, Loathsomeness, all these cannot hinder if thou be but willing : What stickest thou at ? What do'st ail ? Half of this ado would fetch a Heart for the World, a little Mire and Dirt ; and is not Christ far better ?

The Dress for the Sacrament.

Lord ! where am I ? What ! all the Children of the Bride Chamber up and dress'd, and I slumbering in my Bed ! Tell me, ye fairest, what make you up so early ? Alas ! our Lord was up before us all ; he called us up by break of Day, and wondered that we were not trimming our Lamps, knowing with whom we were to feast this Day ! Well then, I will rise up too : O, what a Shew do these bright and glittering Saints make in my Eyes ! surely they did not thus dress themselves : It was my Father made them thus prepared to entertain his Son. But where are my Cloaths ? Now for the fairest, sweetest Robe of Thoughts, and Wishes, that can be found. O how naked am I ! But where are my silken, golden Twists of Faith, to
hang

72 *The Character and Trial*

hang the Jewels of Joy, and Love and Humility upon? I am never dress'd till they be on! O where are they? I saw them by me but just now; I laid them by my Heart before I went to Bed: But, ah! I fear this envious World hath with her Vanities stolen them away, or the envious Devil, or Unbelief, hath been ravelling or snarling of them, that now I am as far to seek as ever. Whither, O whither, shall I go to find them out! Now will the Bridegroom come, and I am not ready! I cannot, dare not go to Day; now will my Lord be angry, and ask me why I came not, and I have no Answer to make him; and if I go undress'd, he will ask me where is my Wedding Garment? and then I shall be speechless. Ah, foolish, simple Heart, that thou should'st let these Thoughts of Earth so entangle themselves with thy Heavenly Meditations, how to get them loose again thou know'st not; this by Care thou mightest have prevented. Now what Help? Lord, I have sinned! O, holy Father, pardon this time, and I will take more heed! O come and untie my Thoughts from this Earth, and come and dress me up as best pleaseth thee! Come, be not discouraged, O my Soul, let but thy Attire of Grace be whole, that is, sincere, and thy God and

av.our

Saviour will accept thee, tho' thy Garments are not so much perfumed with Heaven as thy Brethrens are, thy Lord knows all have not Talents alike; and where he gives but little, he expects but little; thou hast an honest, willing, serious Heart, that thinks it doth despise and trample under Feet the nearest, dearest Pleasures, Profits, and Glories in the World, compared with him that gave himself to Death for thee, and hadst rather anger all the World than him, by sinning against him in the least: If this be true, fear not, thou hast thy Wedding-Garment on, thou art well clad; as mean soever as it is, it is such an one as Heaven gave thee, and such an one as thy dear Redeemer can, and will embrace thee in.

The Presence-Chamber.

Fear not, O my Soul, I charge thee; do not faint; let not thy Weakness and the Poverty of thy Grace discourage thee; see how thy Lord draws nigh; O he comes, and it is but to welcome thee, and fall about thy Neck and kils thee, and bid thee a kind Welcome to thy bleeding Lord!

The Bread.

Welcome, Fairest! take and eat; it is the sweetest Dainties, dearest Morsel Heaven can afford thee. Welcome, my Dear, to the Table of thy Lord! welcome a thousand times I bid thee; yea welcomer than thine own Heart can wish: Take, eat this Morsel, it costs my Life, it is a Portion thy Father sent unto thee by me, and bid me remember thee of his Love to thee: He bids thee remember a Father's Love, I a Saviour's; he hath a Heart to give thee, and so have I, take this in earnest of them both in one; take freely, if thou wert not welcome, I would have told thee, I would have ask'd thee for thy Wedding-Garment! Tell me, O tell me, dost thou not love me? I know thou dost; And wilt not thou take the Cross, and follow me? I know thou wilt: I heard thee, and had Compassion on thy Groanings; I know thee well enough, thou are mine, and I am thine; take it, I charge thee eat it, as thou lovest me; and while thou feedest, remember the Love of thy dearest Redeemer.

The Wine.

Come, my Dearest, I have drunk, and thou shalt pledge me; I have broached my Sides,

Sides, and drew it on purpose for thee ; this is a Wine of my own making, when I trod the Wine-Prefs of my Father's Wrath ; it is my Blood, take and drink it ; Sin was the Cause of my wounding ; but to thy Soul it shall prove healing ; I died and bled to make this Banquet for thee, I have brought thee into my Wine-Cellar, and my Banner over thee shall be Love : Fear not, take and drink ; thou hast an Ulcer in thy Heart, and this shall cure it ; thy Spirits are faint, this shall revive thee ; Drink, I charge thee, drink on thy Love and Loyalty to me ; I command thee, as thou wilt have thy Heart to mend, thy Wounds to be cured, thy Spirit, to revive, thy Fears to scatter, thy Soul to love and obey me ! Take, O take this Cup into thy Hand ; taste it, and praise my Name !

Memorable Sayings and Passages collected, and transcribed for his own Use. These are some among others.

WHat we are affraid to *do* before Men, we should be affraid to *think* before God ; because our secret Thoughts are as obvious to the Eyes of God, as our Actions to the Eyes of Men. God

God shewed more Mercy in saving *some*, when he might have condemned *all*; than he did Justice in leaving *some* to perish, when he might have saved *none*.

Great Vertues, without Sincerity of Heart, are rejected, when great Infirmities, without Hypocrisie, are pardon'd.

A good Intention cannot make a bad Action good; tho' an ill Intention may make an Action in itself good to be evil.

He who presumes to sin, in Hopes of *Repentance*, shall be sure to *repent*, because he presumes.

They who presume most in a time of Prosperity, are most apt to despair in Adversity.

Repent *one Day before thou diest*, was good Counsel: I know not when that Day will be; therefore I will repent *to Day*, lest it should be too late *to-Morrow*. He that delays his Repentance one Day, hath another Day more to repent of, and one Day less to do it in.

God, who joins the End and Means together, doth accomplish all his Purposes Good to us, by working in us Desires and Endeavours suitable to those Purposes.

Better go to Heaven by the Gates of Hell, than to Hell by the Gates of Heaven; mourning, to the Heavenly Glory, than

than laughing to the Place of Torment.

One may suffer, and not sin ; but if he sin he shall be sure to suffer.

Herod might have kept his Oath, and not have cut off the Baptist's Head ; he only promised to grant what she ask'd to the half of his Kingdom, whereas the Prophet's Head was more worth than the whole.

Such is the infinite Extent and Value of our Saviour's Merit, that tho' a Man had the Guilt of as many Sins lying on his Soul, as there be drops of Water in the Ocean ; and if they were of as long Continuance as from the Creation of the World, and aggravated with as hainous Circumstances as any of the vilest Sinners in Hell, yet there is merit enough in the Blood of Christ to take away the Guilt of all those Sins ; and when that is done, Merit enough left to purchase as great a Glory as any Saint in Heaven enjoys. But let none thereupon presume to go on in Sin, for there is not a Word of Comfort in the whole Bible for such an one.

He that is affraid of too much Grace, hath none at all. He who is unwilling to be made better, is not yet good.

In the most afflicted Condition of a Saint, he hath more reason to question his

78 *The Character and Trial*

his own Love to God, than God's Love to him.

God takes as much Care of every one of his Children, as if he had but one to care for.

Our Times are in the Hands of God. If they were in our Enemies Hands, our Afflictions and Trials would be too long; if in our own, too short : But because in the Hand of God, Deliverance shall be seasonable and in due time.

Had we ten thousand Lives and Estates to loose and lay down for Christ, one Hour's Communion with him in Glory will recompence for all our Self-denial, whatever we have done or suffered.

That man lives unlawfully, who doth not sometimes abstain from lawful things.

Make it thy Business to act Grace, and then trust God to bring in Comfort.

God is yours, if you are unfeignedly willing to be his : He that can from his Heart say, *Lord I am thine !* may on good grounds be assur'd that the Lord is his God.

That Man whom God cannot satisfie, nothing can ; for God is to his People whatever they can desire or need : Sight to the Blind, Bread to the Hungry, Cloathing to the Naked, Strength to the Weak, a Phyfician to the Sick. Pardon to the Guilty, Comfort to the Mourners,

Life

Life in Death, and Everlasting Life after Death.

When the Devil suggested to a good Man, That it was in vain for him to mind God, for he should never get to Heaven : He replied. I will then follow hard after him, and keep close to him, that I may enjoy as much as possible of God here on Earth.

Where Sin lies heavy, every Affliction will be light.

'Twas the Saying of the Noble Marquess of Vico, Their Money perish with them, who think all the Wealth in the World worth one Hour's Communion with Jesus Christ.

Since no Man can see thee, and live, Lord ! let me die, said an holy Man, that I may see thee, and be with thee.

If your Condition be never so low, if your Hearts be lower, it is well enough, the issue will be good. And while God the Fountain is left, you need not much complain for want of a broken Cistern.

While others live *without God* in the World, a Christian should endeavour to live *as without the World*, in and upon his God.

The same Love of God which leads one Christian into the Wine-Cellar, and gives him Assurance, may lead another into a Prison,

80 *The Character and Trial*

Prison, for the Trial and Exercise of his Grace.

In Prayer, if a Man have not a care of the first Wandrings of his Heart from God, he will hardly be able to recover himself afterwards.

'Twas a memorable Saying of a Great Man, *He may be deceived, who thinks to save any thing by his Religion more than his Soul.*

Before a Man is humbled he complains of God's Unkindness to him, but afterwards of his own to God.

God had one Son *without any Sin*, our Blessed Redeemer, but never any Son without some Affliction and Suffering.

Blessed be God, we have any thing to deny, or lose, or count nothing for Christ.

A Believer prays with Fervency, as if he would not be delay'd, and then waits patiently, as if he had not prayed.

If you can say God is your God, and all that is in the World is his, how can you fear Want? If he be not *All-sufficient*, why do you call him so? If he be so, why do you not trust in him?

If the Lord be good to the Soul that seeks him, how good is he to the Soul that finds him.

If, saith *Jerom*, my Father and Mother did with Tears intreat me, and my Wife hang about my Neck, and my Children

all at my Feet, to beseech me to forsake
Christ, I would cast them all off, Father,
Mother, Wife and Children, and say,
Farewell all, welcome Christ.

THE following Account of the Con-
version of his Niece, will give far-
ther Testimony of his Charity, Zeal and
Diligence to promote Religion in his Fa-
mily; and how God honoured him by the
lustre of an holy Example, to recom-
mend serious Godliness to those who saw
his Conversation, and by his seasonable
counsels to assist the Recovery of one,
who, under great Convictions and Temp-
tations, was in Danger to be lost, by too long
concealing of the State of her Case, from
such as could advise and direct her.

*Short Account of the Conversion of
Mrs. P. F. as she left it under her
Hand before her Death.*

I Am now going about to call to mind
the great Mercy and Goodness of
the Lord towards me, the unwor-
thy of all his Servants; to record his
loving-kindness, and to make mention of
the

the many and great Deliverances I have had. I know not where to begin, nor where to make an end : I am even swallowed up in Admiration, and ready to cry out with *David*; *What shall I render to the Lord for all his Benefits?* especially when I consider my own Vileness by Nature and how I deserved to be cast into Hell as soon as I was born, having an Heart full of Sin, Vanity, and Rebellion against God, being conceived in Sin, and born in Iniquity. And, as if this had not been enough, I have added numberless most heinous Transgressions. I have reason to bewail the Sins of my Thoughts ; I was thinking Thoughts of Pride and Vanity as soon as I could think : I was running away from God as soon as I could go, with my Back towards Heaven, and my Face towards Hell. After I came to Years of Discretion, the more I knew of God, the more I sinned against him. The Sins of my Youth have been innumerable, and very hainous in their Nature ; so that I have cause to pray with *David*, *Lord, remember not against me the Sins of my Youth.* O the precious Time I have lost ! and the Golden Opportunities that I have squandered away ! The Light and Love, the Mercies and Means of Grace that I have sinned against ! I have spent the best

my Years in the Service of Sin, and in the Neglect of the great Concerns of my Soul.

I confess, when I was but a Child, since I had any Understanding, I had always some Love to the Ways and People of God, and some Delight in Holy Duties, and was fearful of Sin, especially of Lying and Stealing, and playing upon the Sabbath-Day. I delighted to read the Word of God, and good Books, to others, but I did not apply it to myself; as when I read that Scripture, that *except we repent, we shall all perish; Except we are born again, we cannot see the Kingdom of God: That the wicked shall be turned into Hell, &c.* I thought these did not concern me, because I was guilty of no gross Sin; I reckon'd my Condition was good, and I was ready to pity others; but I was not sensible of the Corruption and Defilement of my Nature: I did not see the Need of a Change, I was not sensible of my undone Condition without Christ; I saw not his Excellency, nor had any Desires after him; I knew not upon what Terms I must take him, if I would be saved.

As to the outward Duties of Religion, I lived in the Performance of many of them (but as for the more inward and spiritual Duties of Christianity, such as Self-examination, Meditation, Self-denial, mourning

mourning for Sin, and watching over my Thoughts, Words, and Actions, strict Observation of the Lord's Day, &c. to these I was altogether a Stranger. Thus I went on in Rebellion against God, having a Form of Godliness, but denying the Power: And if God had then cut me off in my Unregeneracy, certainly Hell-Fire must have been my Portion. He might have sworn in his Wrath that I should never enter into his Rest. O the wonderful Patience and Forbearance of the Lord towards such a sinful Creature! It is a Miracle of Mercy, I am yet on this side the Grave and Hell! It is of the Lord's Mercy that I am spared so long, and that he gives me space to repent; that he should afford me the Means of Grace, and send his holy Spirit to strive with me, and give me many Convictions, and all to reclaim me, and bring me home to himself! And that he should not only give me space to repent, but an Heart to repent! That he should not only stand waiting, and knocking at the Door of my Heart so many Years, calling on me to repent, but that he should give me the Grace of Repentance! This is undeserved Love, and distinguishing Mercy: For I was dead in Trespases and Sins, and had nothing but my Misery to move his Compassion.

walked according to the course of this World, I was insensible of my Danger, tho' ready to drop into Hell every moment : And I should certainly have perished, had not the Lord been pleased to open my Eyes, and to pluck me as a Fire-brand out of the burning, and set me in the way to Heaven ; for which I can never sufficiently adore and praise his glorious Grace in Christ to me a vile, sinful Creature:

Great was his Mercy towards me, for he hath delivered my Soul from the lowest Hell ; which makes me say with *David*, *Come and bear, all ye that fear the Lord, and I will declare what he hath done for my Soul*, and the Way and Means whereby he was pleased to work upon my Heart. The Manner of my Conversion, which I hope is true and real, is as follows.

It pleased the Lord, by a sad Providence, *viz.* the Sickness at *London*, to bring my Uncle *Gearing*, and his Family, from thence to my Father's House, where they continued about half a Year. My Uncle being a good Man, I could not but take notice of his strict and circumspect Walking, and was much affected with it : And I began to think, surely the Way that I am in will never bring me to Heaven ; I thought I must live another man.

ner of Life, if ever I would be saved I had many *Convictions*, but there I stayed, and went no further; I kept on in my former careless course. When it pleased God to put a stop to the Plague at *London*, my *Uncle* returned with his Family; and I went with him, and continued at his House about two Months, in which time it pleased the Lord to follow me with new *Convictions*; partly by the good Example of my *Unkle*, partly by many excellent Sermons, which I heard when I was there; so that I began in good earnest to look after the Salvation of my Soul, and to say with the Goaler, *What must I do to be saved?*

I began to be very desirous to hear the Word, I took all Opportunities to hear, and gave Attention to what was preached, after another manner than I was wont to do, and laboured to make Application of it to myself. I heard Mr. *Vincent* preach upon *Heb. 12. 14. Follow Holiness, without which no Man shall see the Lord*; urging the Necessity of it, as the only way to Heaven. I was much affected therewith, and began to think I must set about the Work of a thorow Repentance. I began to be sensible of my Original Corruption, and that I had been guilty of thousands of actual Sins: Those which before I counted

ted
and
in a
how
Stat
me
ven
by
have
shou
not
had
I
II.
and
Pro
soon
vite
tho
thei
my
ing
my
to n
of J
c. m
see
chie
y.
Hu
ha
ne

ted small, I now look'd upon as great ; and upon myself, by reason of Sin, to be in a lamentable Condition. I knew not how to get out of this sinful, miserable State ; and the Lord was pleased to shew me that there was no Name under Heaven by which I could be saved, but only by *Jesus Christ* : I thought, if I could have an Interest in *Him*, and his Favour, I should be saved ; but I feared God would not thus have Mercy upon me, because I had gone on so long in Sin.

I heard an excellent Sermon upon *Mat. II. 28. Come unto me all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you Rest* : Proving, *first*, that Sin is a Burden : And, *secondly*, that burdened Sinners are invited to come to Christ ; and then, that those that come to him, shall find Rest for their Souls. This was a sutable Word to my Soul, I was much affected in the hearing of it ; for I felt Sin to be a Burden to my Conscience, and I would fain have Rest to my Soul. I was sensible of my Want of *Jesus Christ*, and of the absolute Necessity to be interested in him ; I began to see his Worth and Excellency, as the chiefest of Ten thousands, altogether lovely. And then, and not till then, I had Hungerings and Thirstings after him ; so that I could say, *None but Christ ; give me Christ, or else I die.* F 2 Thus

88 *The Character and Trial*

Thus it pleased the Lord by his Spirit to work upon my Heart, by degrees to open mine Eyes, and to let in some Spiritual Light into my Understanding, which was *dark* before ; and to give some Spiritual Life to my Affections, which were *dead* before. But O the Enemies that did then labour to hinder my Conversion, and stop this Work ! *The World*, by Allurements and Discouragements, sought to keep me off from Christ : *My own deceitful Heart*, and corrupt Disposition within me, were no small Enemy and Hinderance to the Work of Grace in my Soul. *The Devil*, the great Adversary of God's Glory and our Happiness, came like a roaring Lion ready to devour me ; so that I had certainly been foiled, if God by his Omnipotent Grace had not supported and delivered me. When Satan saw me first set my Face towards Heaven, he employ'd all his Skill and Diligence to hinder it. Formerly he had told me I needed *not Repent*, because I was not guilty of gross Sins ; but now he saw that I was sensible of my Vileness and Sinfulness by Nature and Life, he saw that Sin was my Burden, and that I was convinced that I must repent or perish, he left off this Temptation, and told me *it was too soon to repent yet* that I was young, and might live
many

many Years, and take my Pleasure; that I might repent when I was old, or upon a sick Bed. To that end he suggested to me, that the Life of a Christian was a sad uncomfortable Life; that if I entered upon this Course, I must bid Farewell to all Mirth and Pleasure, and spend my Days in Sorrow. But then I began to think with myself, that it was better to do so, than lie down in Hell-Torments to all Eternity.

When Satan saw that he could not prevail in this Temptation, he found out another; he went about to persuade me, That if I began to walk in the Ways of God, and did hold out a little way, it was a thousand to one if I held out to the end; *I should certainly fall away, and turn Apostate*: And this was the worst Condition of all, to return with the Dog to the Vomit, &c. He brings that Scripture to my Mind, *If after we have escaped the Pollutions of the World, we are again entangled therein, the latter end is worse than the beginning: For it had been better not to have known the Way of Righteousness, than after we have known it to turn from it.* He followed me with this Temptation, but it pleased God by his Spirit to enable me in some measure to resist it and repel it; for I was persuaded,

if God had begun a good Work of Grace in me, he was able to carry it on, and to keep me from falling away, tho' at that time I was not acquainted with those Scriptures that prove the *Preservance of the Saints*. Thus was I troubled and tossed with various Temptations, and no sooner rid of one, but another came.

I heard a Sermon upon *Matth. 13. 45.* *The Kingdom of Heaven is like a Merchant-man, seeking goodly Pearl: Who, when he had found one of the great Price, went and sold all that he had to buy it.* I received much Light and Comfort from this Sermon, and saw more of the transcendent Excellency of *Jesus Christ*, who was the *Pearl of Price*, and I thought I could most willingly part with all, even Life itself, for him.

Then he tempted me to question the Truth of the Holy Scriptures, and I was put upon it to prove them to be the Word of God. This I was not able to do, therefore this Temptation was the longer upon me, and I was much perplexed about it: And had the Devil prevailed with this, he needed not have followed me with any other Temptation.

When this was a little over, he came like a roaring Lion ready to devour me, not as an Angel of Light; but shewing himself

himself in his own Colours like a Devil, he assaulted me with the *most Horrid, Atheistical, and Blasphemous Temptations*, that were possible for him to invent. He struck deep, and went about to destroy the Foundation of all Religion: He tempted me to that which I am ashamed to think of, and even tremble to mention, even to believe there was *no God, nor Devil, Heaven, nor Hell*: Tho' I did not believe his Temptation, nor willingly entertain it, yet could I by no means be rid of it; it came very strong upon me, followed me from Bed to Board; and tho' I was terrified with the Thoughts of it, I could not put it out of my Mind, and I was in great Perplexity of Spirit: But the Lord was pleased secretly to preserve me, and support me under these grievous Assaults, and in some measure to repel them. But behold the Policy of Satan! though *this Temptation* did not prevail, it made way for *Another*, which presently followed: For he who had tempted me to have such horrid Atheistical Thoughts, now began to terrifie me for them; he set Sin before me in its Aggravations, and told me, that now I was worse than the very Devils, for they believe that there is a God, and tremble; therefore I then thought I should certainly be damned,

that I was past all Hopes of Salvation ; I looked upon myself as ripe for Damnation, and ready for Hell-Torments. He had often told me it was *too soon to repent*, now he told me it was *too late*. Many Scripture-Threatenings were brought to my Mind that did exceedingly terrifie me, as that in *Isaiab*, *There is no Peace, saith my God, to the Wicked*. And that *the wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the Nations that forget God*, as I knew I had done of a long time. Likewise *Psal. 20. 22.* and *Prov. 1. 24.* to the end. When I went about to read the Scripture, then that Place came to my Mind, *What hast thou to do to declare my Statutes, or to take my Covenant into thy Mouth?* *Psal. 50. 16.* When I had Thoughts of praying to the Lord for Grace, that Scripture came fresh into my Mind, *The Prayer of the wicked is an Abomination*. These, with many other Scriptures, did affright and terrifie me, I knew not what to do. I saw myself utterly undone without an Interest in Christ, and yet I durst not lay hold on him for Salvation.

I cannot express the Sorrows of my Mind under these strong Convictions, and various Temptations. My Heart was filled with Horror and Terror Day and Night for some Weeks together. O the
Depth

Depth of Satan's Wiles! He that had led me along all my Days in *Presumption*, now went about to drive me to *Despair*. How hard a thing it is to keep between these two Extremes! Had not God upheld me by his Power and Mercy, I had certainly been dashed to pieces between these two Rocks.

Satan has tempted me to think I had committed *the Sin against the Holy Ghost*, by my arheistical and blasphemous Thoughts, and because I sinned against so much Light. This was a great and sore Trouble to me, and an heavy Burden upon my Conscience. This Scripture did much terrifie me, *Repentance is bid from thine Eyes*; and another, *He that believeth not is condemned already, and the Wrath of God abideth on him*. I looked upon all the Threatnings as spoken to me; every thing added to my Sorrow. When I read *the Promises*, they administered no Comfort to me, but rather Terror, because I thought I had no right to them, or to those things they assured us of. When I heare of *the Joys of Heaven*, and of the Glory of it, it increased my Trouble to think there should be so much Happiness, and I have no share in it, but must be banished from God and Happiness forever. And when I thought of *the Tor*

94 *The Character and Trial*

ments of Hell, the Fire that must never go out, and the Worm that shall never die; this I looked upon as the due Desert of my Sins, and as my Portion.

I had renounced all my own Righteousness, I could see nothing in myself but what deserved Hell; I wondered at the Patience of God to me, I could justify him tho' he should damn me. I thought myself unworthy to eat, or drink, or breathe, or tread upon the Earth: I looked every Day when God would glorifie himself in my Damnation; but this I kept to myself: Tho' others could not but take notice of the Sadness of my Spirit; and wondered at it; yet I did not tell any how it was with me. My Heart was very full, and I longed to vent it, but I knew not how. *To God* I durst not go, being conscious of my own Vileness. I was ashamed to make known my Condition *to Man*, it was so bad; I thought none ever had such blasphemous thoughts as I had. I wished some of the Saints did know my Condition, that they might direct me, and pray for me; but could not tell to whom to apply myself.

Thus was I in Perplexity, tossed to and fro, and not comforted. And tho' the Lord was pleased to uphold me, and keep me from falling into the Pit of *Despair*, yet

yet I was very near it. I was encompassed about with so many and great Temptations, and they came so strong upon me, that I could not hold out any longer to conceal my Trouble : Then the Lord put it into my Mind to acquaint my Uncle Gearing with my sad Condition ; but the Devil endeavoured all he could to hinder it, by perswading me that it was a foolish thing to declare my Wickedness to one that was so holy ; that I should but purchase his ill Opinion of me, and cause him to hate and abhor me, and do myself no good at all by telling him of it : Yet, still I had a Desire to do it, and had no Rest in my Spirit till I had done it. But sometimes I wanted an Opportunity, and sometimes when I would have spoken, I could not. But at last a fit Opportunity was presented upon a Sabbath-Day Night, all being in Bed except my Uncle and myself. I was resolved to open my Heart to him.

When I began to speak, my Mouth was as it were stopped, but with trembling I forced myself to speak, and made known my sad Condition. I told him what grievous Blasphemous Thoughts I had, and that I was affraid I had committed *the Sin against the Holy Ghost*, and thought therefore I should certainly be damned, and had

had no hopes of Salvation ; but I desired his Prayers for me, and his Advice in a Matter of such Consequence. It pleased the Lord to affect his Heart with my Condition. He told me it was not my Sin to be tempted, if I did not yield to the Temptation : And therefore it should not drive me to despair of God's Mercy. He said it was a Sign I had not committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost, because I was affraid I had committed it. He spoke much of the gracious Nature of God, and of his Willingness to save Sinners ; and, as I remember, he told me of many and great Sinners in Scripture, to whom God had shewed Mercy, as *Manassah*, and *Mary Magdalen*, and *the Thief upon the Cross*. He also directed me to many sweet Promises in Scripture ; but that especially which is never to be forgotten, *Ezek. 36. 25, 26. Then will I sprinkle clean Water upon you, and you shall be clean ; from all your Filthiness, and from all your Idols will I cleanse you. A new Heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you, &c.* He told me every one might lay hold on this Promise. When he read these Scriptures to me, my Heart rejoiced, and I began to hope God would pardon me, and give me a new Heart, and cause me to walk in his Ways. He also gave me

me very good Counsel, particularly to be constant in the Excellent Duty of *Secret Prayer*, and told me the great Benefit I should find thereby, &c.

Now having made known my Condition, and declared my Trouble, and hearing these gracious Promises to poor Sinners, I found some Ease and Satisfaction in my Mind, and the beginning of Comfort in my Soul. I resolved to put these Duties in practice, Secret Prayer, Self-examination, Meditation, &c. But I was altogether a Stranger to these inward Heart-Duties, I knew not how to perform them as I ought. How many times have I kneeled down to pray, and knew not what to say, but wanted not Sighs and Tears? And so my Necessity, and the Sense of my Vileness, and dearest Desires after Christ and his Grace, put Words into my Mouth. Tho' my Duties were miserably lame and defective, yet they were performed with much Earnestness and Importunity; and I think I may say *in Sincerity*; surely then my Heart was in every Word, and in every Duty; I did not then dally with God, I was in good earnest for my Soul; and that Promise was Comfortable to me, *If there be first a willing Mind, it is accepted with God, &c.* I found that Scripture made good to me, *Then shall we know*
if

98 *The Character and Trial*

if we follow on to know the Lord. And that in Isa. 42. 16. I will bring the Blind by the way that they knew not; I will make Darkneſs Light before them, and crooked things ſtrait: Theſe things will I do unto them, and not forſake them, ſaith the Lord. Theſe, and ſuch Scriptures were ſweet, and I began to ſearch the Bible to find them: And when the Lord was pleaſed to ſet them home upon my Heart, they were as Cordials many times to my fainting Soul.

But tho' I had ſome Comfort and Support, yet was I not free from Temptations and Trouble of Mind. My ſpiritual Enemies ſtrove hard to hinder my Godly Courſe, and turn me from it, had not the Lord been ſtronger than they. My Sin was a heavy Burden to me, and I had earneſt Deſires after Chriſt; yet I found it very hard to believe. Satan laboured to perſwade me, that *I was not elected to Salvation*; and therefore, whatever I did, I ſhould never be ſaved. This was no ſmall Trouble to my Spirit; but it pleaſed the Lord to direct me to a Book, in which I found much Satisfaction concerning this Matter.

Then Satan told me, *He that believeth not, ſhould be damned*; and therefore, becauſe I was full of Unbelief and Doubting,
I was

I was condemned already. But when I was in great Trouble about this, it pleased the Lord to cast in this Scripture, *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.* This did very much support me, and so did these following Promises, which I had not taken notice of before, nor applied to myself, *Isa.* 55. 1. and all this Chapter; and *Mat.* 11. 28. *Job.* 7. 37. *Rev.* 22. 17. *Job.* 3. 16. *Mat.* 7. 7. *Psal.* 30. 18. *Job.* 16. 24. *Psal.* 84. 11. *Isa.* 40. 27. *Psal.* 27. 14. *Lament.* 3. 24, 25, 26. *Psal.* 147. 11. *Psal.* 26. 3, 4. *Isa.* 50. 10. *Isa.* 41. 10. *Isa.* 43. 24, 25. *Isa.* 44. 22. 1 *Job.* 1. 9. 1 *Job.* 2. 1. *Mark* 1. 18, 19. *Rom.* 6. 14. *Ezek.* 34. 6. *Psal.* 103. 8, 9. *Job.* 17. 9. *Prov.* 4. 18. *Phil.* 1. 6. *Job.* 10. 7. *Rom.* 16. 20. *Heb.* 4. 15.

These Promises, with many more, was the Lord pleased to give me in the time of my Distress and Trouble of Spirit, and I found them reviving Cordials. O how welcome was a Promise to me! When I have been ready to despair, and to give up all for lost, and had nothing to support me; then I did take the Bible into my Hand, and desire God to direct some suitable Promise to me; and opening the Bible the first place I have cast mine Eye upon, hath often been a precious and suitable Promise, and hath been set home with

100 *The Character and Trial*

with such Power as wonderfully to comfort me.

Once, being under great Fear and Terror, I opened the Bible, and the first place I fixed my Eye upon, was *Isa. 54. 4.* *Fear not, for thou shalt not be confounded, nor put to shame; thou shalt forget the Shame of thy Youth; thy Maker is thy Husband, the Lord of Hosts is his Name, and thy Redeemer the Holy one of Israel, the God of the whole Earth shall be called: for the Lord hath called thee as a Woman forsaken and grieved in Spirit, &c. For a small Moment have I forsaken thee, but with great Mercy will I gather thee. In a little Wrath I hid my Face for a moment, but with everlasting Kindness will I have Mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, &c.* I was wonderfully affected in the reading these sweet Promises, and took it as a Voice from Heaven to me, because I had desired some such futable Promise.

At another time, being in great Trouble, and fearing I should never hold out, but be overcome by Sin and Satan, I opened my Bible, and the first place I fixed my Eye upon, was *Isa. 41. 10.* *Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my Righteousness.* I cannot

cannot
this f
On
follow
believ
troubl
ved su
vain
lief.
had of
and t
Love,
not elec
was to
ver be
strong
labours
to weal
Despair
times b
the roa
be foile
sent th
no Tem
is commu
who wil
what yo
tation m
be able to
At an
with Un

cannot express the Comfort I received by this sutable and seasonable Promise.

One Sabbath-Day Night, being still followed with Temptations, full of unbelieving Doubts and Fears; I was much troubled about it, that I who had received such great Mercies, should have such vain Thoughts, and be so full of Unbelief. Notwithstanding the Experience I had of God's Goodness and Mercy to me, and the Assurance I had before of his Love, was tempted to think that *I was not elected*, and that therefore all I did was to no purpose, and that I should never be saved: This was a subtile and strong Temptation: Satan did not only labours to drive me off from all Duty, but to weaken my Faith, and bring me to Despair: But the Lord, who had many times before wonderfully rescued me from the roaring Lion, would not suffer me to be foiled by him, but was pleased to present that Scripture to my Eye, *There is no Temptation has taken you, but such as is common to Men; and God is Faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will with the Temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

At another time, being greatly troubled with Unbelief, that Place in the *Revelation*

tions was terrible to me. *The Fearful and Unbelieving shall have their part in the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death.* This made me exceedingly affraid : I thought if the *Fearful and Unbelieving* should perish, then surely I should, because I was so full of Fears, and Doubts, and Unbelief. But the Lord did not leave me in this great Streight, he would not suffer me to be overwhelmed with Sorrow but quickly directed me to a futable and seasonable Scripture, that was as comfortable as the other was terrible, 2 Tim. 2. 13. *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.* This Promise was very sweet, and futable to my present Condition ; neither did I remember there was such a Place before. These, and many of the fore-named Promises were given me in my Trouble and Distress ; and the Lord enabled me by the Spirit to make Application of 'em to my own Soul for my Consolation. Certainly I may say with David, *I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the Goodness of the Lord in the Land of the Living.* The sorrows of Death did compass me about, and the Pains of Hell got hold upon me, I found Trouble and Sorrow. Then called I upon the Name of the Lord, O Lord, *I beseech thee, deliver my Soul ! Gracious*

is the
merci
ed me
for t
thee.
withi
In th
me,
in my
be h
cation
Song
helpea
bad b
again
The I
into b
ed me
me in
say a
towar
from
Bu
fible
1.
100
ring
of G
I, wh
bel a
but w
Lord

is the Lord, and righteous, yea our God is merciful ; I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. In the Multitude of my Thoughts within me, thy Comforts delight my Soul. In the Day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenest me with Strength in my Soul. Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the Voice of my Supplication, the Lord is my Strength and my Song ; my Hearts trusted in him, and I am helped. If it had not been the Lord, who had been on my side, when Satan rose up against me, he had surely swallowed me up. The Lord has called me out of Darknefs into his marvelous Light. He hath plucked me as a Fire-brand out of Hell, and set me in the way to Heaven : So that I may say again and again, Great is his Mercy towards me, for he hath delivered my Soul from the lowest Hell.

But, O ! why is it that I am so little sensible of this great Deliverance ! How can I look back upon all this without admiring the Free Grace, and undeserved Love of God towards such a worthless Worm as I, who was an Enemy to him, and a Rebel against him, and had nothing in me but what deserved Hell ? O that ever the Lord should from Eternity elect and choose

104 *The Character and Trial*

choose me to Salvation, through Jesus Christ! That God should pass by thousands, and let them alone to perish in their Sins, and cast a Look of Love upon me, and when I was in my Blood, say unto me, *Live!* That he should not only give his Son *for me*, but *to me!* That he should take me, with the Prodigal, from the Trough, and with the Beggar from the Dunghil, and make me an Heir of Glory! When I read that Christ's Flock is but a little Flock, and that *strait is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that lead to Life, and few there be that find it*; I cannot but wonder that I should be in that Number! And because I cannot sufficiently admire, I will therefore adore my Good God. But what Returns should I now make to the Lord for all this Mercy! Of myself I am not able to think a good Thought, it is unlikely then I should make any suitable Return! I have nothing of my own but Sin, and that is God's Enemy which he perfectly hates. I am not my own, for I am bought with a Price; Therefore, if I give myself to him, it is but that which was his own before; Yet this will I do, because I have nothing else to give; I will give my Soul and Body to the Lord's, expecting Acceptance only for the Sake and Merits of Jesus Christ.

Christ
me, b
All th
on of
had th
and P
and f
my Sou
boly A
forget
all thi
and I
and I
the L
dureth
ing So
Thing
and k
Mouth
has k
becaus
therefo
live.
will b
will p
Praise
An
I cann
in the
hope
the N

Christ. Surely God requires nothing of me, but what he hath first given to me. All that he requireth, is but the Reflection of his Love back again, when I have had the Comfort of it. O what Thanks and Praise should I render to the Lord, and say with *David*, *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and all that is within me bless his holy Name ! Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits ! He forgiveth all thine Iniquities, &c. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee ; thou art my God, and I will extol thee : O give Thanks unto the Lord, for he is good ; for his Mercy endureth for ever ! For he satisfieth the longing Soul, and filleth the Hungry with good Things. I will bless the Lord at all times, and his Praise shall be continually in my Mouth. I will love the Lord, because he has heard the Voice of my Supplication ; because he has inclined his Ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. I will extol thee, my God, O King, I will bless thy Name for ever and ever ! I will praise the Lord while I live, I will sing Praise to my God while I have any Being.*

And now, when I look back upon this, I cannot but rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my Salvation ; because I hope I have gone through the Pangs of the *New-Birth*, and truly enter'd in at the
strait

strait Gate, and am now going the narrow Way that leads to *Eternal Life*, which I hope to obtain through the Merits of Jesus Christ my Saviour.

And again, When I reflect and look back upon all these Things, what Cause have I to bewail the Sins of my Youth, and the State of my Unregeneracy, which was spent in Sin an Vanity, and in those things wherein there is no Profit? If God should remember against me the Sins of my Youth, he might write bitter things against me. If I should live the Age of *Methusalab*, and spend all my Time in weeping, the Tears of my Life to come were not sufficient to bewail the Sins of my Life past. O what did I lose, when I enjoyed no Communion with God! How much richer might I have been in Grace and Holiness, had I set out in the Way to Heaven sooner! But this is my Comfort, tho' I did not come in at *the first Hour*, yet I did not stay till *the last*. This was the Lord's Mercy. But my Sins *before Conversion*, are not all the Sins which I have to mourn for, but the Sins which I have been guilty of *since*; and in some measure my Sins are greater *since*, than they were *before*. For I have now sinned against clearer Light, dearer Love, more Manifestations of God's Goodness, more Experience

Experience of his Kindness, more Resolutions to obey him, greater Obligations to serve him ; so that I am ashamed to think how unthankful my Walking hath been, since the Lord hath given me some Desires to serve him, some Care to please him, and some Fear to offend him.

When he was pleased first to lift up the Light of his Countenance upon me, and speak Peace to my Soul, after so many Temptations, and Troubles of Conscience; then I did not only serve him with Joy and Thankfulness, but also with Life and Vigor : O how was my Heart affected with spiritual Things ! When I prayed, it was with Sense and Feeling ; it was not only in Word, but I poured out my Soul before the Lord. When I heard the Word of God, how did I hear as for my Life, and performed every Duty as for Eternity ! I did not look upon Duty meerly as a Task, but accounted it a great Privilege to draw nigh to God in the Ways of his Appointment. I found it was not in vain to seek him, I was even filled with the Admiration of his Love, and the Consolations of the Spirit ; and my Heart was enlarged, and ran the Ways of his Commandments with great Delight and Comfort: I could say with the Church,
As the Apple-tree among the Trees of the Wood,

180 *The Character and Triall*

Wood, so was my Beloved Jesus to my Soul; I sate down under his Shadow with great Delight, and his Fruit was sweet unto my Taste. I could in some measure say with David, As the Heart panteth after Water-brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee, O God: My Soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God? O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee: My Flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty Land where no Water is. How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! My Soul longeth; yea even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord; for a Day in thy Courts is better than a thousand, &c. My Soul waiteth for God, from whom cometh my Salvation. He only is my Rock and my Salvation; he is my Defence, I shall not be greatly moved. In God is my Salvation, and my Glory, the Rock of my Strength, and my Refuge is in God. Because thy Loving-kindness is better than Life, my Lips shall praise thee; my Soul shall be satisfied as with Marrow and Fatness, and my Mouth shall praise thee with joyful Lips. With my whole Heart have I sought thee, O Lord; let me not wander from thy Commandments. Thou art my Portion, O Lord, I have said I will keep thy Precepts, for with them thou hast

quicken'd

*quicken'd
is my
is thy
Honey
Comm
Gold.
Th
my
Dwel
sation
thing
I cou
None
I my
my C
make
and c
met
Holy
in a
rectin
knew
say I
yet I
set up
was
to J
and
and
soon
Bu*

quickened me. O how love I thy Law! it is my Meditation all the Day. How sweet is thy Word to my Taste! yea sweeter than Honey to my Mouth; therefore I love thy Commandments above Gold, yea above fine Gold.

Thus was my Heart filled with Joy, and my Mouth with Praise; and tho' my Dwelling was on *Earth*, yet my Conversation was in *Heaven*. I looked upon all things here below with an indifferent eye; I could in some measure say with *Paul*, *None of these things move me, neither count I my Life dear to myself, so I may finish my Course with Joy.* I was able then to make a spiritual Use of every Providence, and of every Mercy, and of every thing I met with. I found the assistance of the Holy Spirit to perform spiritual Duties in a spiritual manner, and helping and directing me to some Duties which I never knew to be my Duty. And tho' I cannot say I was wholly free from Temptation, yet I can say, whenever Satan began to set upon me, I was enabled to see that it was a Temptation, and presently to run to Jesus Christ for Succour and Relief, and to apply the Promises unto my Soul; and quickly found Comfort, and was soon freed from Temptation.

But in this *my Prosperity* I was ready to

110 *The Character and Trial*

say, *I shall never be removed*, I began to think I shall never be in Adversity; and sometimes I was ready to question whether I was one of God's Children, because I had no Afflictions: I thought God did not love me, because he did not chasten me; I thought I could bear any thing he should lay upon me. As I valued not *Life*, so I feared not *Death*; I thought I could freely and willingly lay down my Life for Christ, if I was called to it. But this joyful, lively, active frame of Spirit did not long continue; in about a quarter of a Year it began to abate, and I began to be more cold and indifferent in spiritual things, and not to be so active and lively as before. This was a great trouble to me, and made me question all that was past. I thought I should still have grown better and better, and not worse. Then that Scripture was terrible to me, 2 Pet. 2. 29. *If after they have escaped the pollutions of the World through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, their latter end is worse than their beginning.* And that Scripture, Heb. 6. 4. *It is impossible for those that were once enlightened, and have tasted the good Word of God, &c. if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance.* Also that Text, Rev.

3. 1.
cold,
much
shou
Prom
slidin
certa
that
fiere
forta
bear
part.
And
And
perfo
And
will
T
me,
livel
had
Duti
troul
cing
some
const
T
went
He
was
mot

3. 15. 16. *Because thou art neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my mouth, I was much sensible of my backslidings fear'd I should turn Apostate. Had not that sweet Promise interposed, I will heal their backslidings and love them freely: I had been certainly swallowed up in Despair. Satan, that roaring Lion came upon me very fiercely; but that Scripture was very comfortable to me, I will put my fear into their hearts, and my spirit into their inward parts, and they will never depart from me. And whom he loveth, he loveth to the end. And he that hath begun a good Work, will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ. And faithful is he that hath called you, who will also do it.*

These and other Scriptures did support me, I could not attain to my former lively performance of holy Duties, nor had I that Communion with God in holy Duties as formerly; which was no small trouble to me, and kept me from rejoicing in God: Yet I cannot say but I had sometimes Assurance of God's love, but not constantly, as I had before.

Then my Grandmother being sick, I went to be with her at my Uncle's House: He being a very good Man, his Company was no small Comfort to me: My Grandmother also being a very pious Women,

was always speaking of what was good. I enjoy'd much of God while I was there ; but yet was many times in fear about my Spiritual State, and much troubled with the Temptations of Satan.

After I had been there a quarter of a Year, it pleased the Lord to visit me with the *Small Pox*, which was a very fore Disease to me. I was brought so low, as to be given over for dead by most, if not all that saw me ; and once they thought I had been actually dead. When I was first sick, I began to be in great fear what would become of me if I should die ; but this Cloud was soon blown over, and the Lord was pleased to shine upon me with the Light of his Countenance, and speak Peace to my Conscience : And when I was as weak as I think any could be, and live, yet had I then much inward joy and Comfort ; the Promises were as Cordials to my fainting Spirits. That Promise, *Isa. 41. 10.* did often refresh me, *Fear not for I am with thee ; be not dismayed, for I am thy God ; I will strengthen thee, I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.* That also *Psal. 73. 35.* *My flesh, and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.* So *Psal. 43. 5.* *Why art thou cast down, O my Soul ? Why art thou*
dis-

disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God. These, and many other Promises, were my Support in the Day of my Distress.

I had then such assurance of God's Goodness and Love to me, and of the Pardon of my Sins, and of my Interest in Christ, that I longed for Death, and could not bear the thoughts of living any longer. I had such Fore-tastes of Heaven, that I cared not for the Earth: I earnestly desired to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all. I thought if I should live any longer, I should but sin against God, and that I could not glorifie him in my Life, as I desired. I thought if he should restore me, I should not be enabled to walk answerably to so great a Mercy. These, and other such Reasons, made me impatient of Life, and long for Death. I was angry with any that prayed for my Life. I now fear that I did sin in being so desirous of Death, and not submitting my Will to the Will of God, to be at his Disposal, whether for Death or Life.

So it pleased the Lord, after a long and tedious Sicknes, to raise me up from the very Gates of Death: This was looked upon as almost a Resurrection from the Dead; for which great Deliverance I can

114 *Christian Encouragements*

never be sufficiently thankful. And because I so much desired to die, I did not prize my Life, and this Deliverence as I should have done: Neither did I render I the Lord according to the Mercy I received from him. I desire now to be truly thankful to the Lord for all his Mercies, and to shew forth my Thankfulness, by walking more closely with him all the Days of my Life.

The following encouraging Considerations among others, were collected by him out of several Books and Sermons, and are printed from his own Papers, in hope of being useful for the Support of others.

I.

THOU that complaineſt of a hard Heart, and ſain wouldſt mourn for thy Sins; to thee I ſay, be not diſcouraged, thy Hardneſs feared and felt, is not the Plague of Hardneſs: It is the Diſeaſe indeed of the Heart, but it is not the Curſe, it ſhall not deſtroy thee. Thou may'ſt be comforted under Hardneſs felt and be wailed, and pray'd againſt; true Tenderneſs about Sin is always accompanied with diſlike and hatred againſt Sin, and
with

with watching and striving against it : if thou hast so much Tenderness, bless God, and be thankful.

II.

There is no Instance can be given of a *Soul utterly forsaken of God, that can mourn for the want of his Presence*. If God's Love be precious to thee and most desirable, be thankful, it is not *Grace* that is denied thee, but only *Comfort*. She that mourned that her Beloved was gone and had withdrawn himself, was a *Spouse* still ; she had an Interest in the Bridegroom, tho' she saw him not. Diseases felt in the Soul, seldom prove mortal. Desire after Christ and Sanctification is a Sign of no utter Rejection : The Soul that can truly desire Mercy, is not totally excluded Mercy. O let tempted troubled Souls then be comforted !

The blessed God hath a compassionate open Ear to all sensible self-bemoaning Sinners ; *Jer. 31. 18. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself ; there are none such but shall be heard of God*. They shall be loved of God that loath themselves : They shall be acquitted of God that condemn themselves ; his merciful Ear is still open to Self-bemoaning Sinners. When once a Sinner comes to *himself*, he is not far from God, *Isa. 40. 27. Why sayest thou,*

116. Christian Encouragements

O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, *my way is bid from the Lord, and my Judgment is passed over from my God?* The inward Thought of many sensible Sinners is, that God hath cast them off, and shut his Door of Mercy upon them, and will never concern himself more in their Salvation: Such unkind thoughts we are apt to have of a good God, when Conscience brings our Sins to a bitter remembrance. Well now, saith God, *Why say'st thou, O Jacob?* the words are a Reproof for Distrust of God. Why dost thou think and speak so unkindly of me, as that I should cast thee out of my care and thoughts? *My way is bid from the Lord:* What is the meaning of that? Why God takes no notice of my Wretchedness to commiserate my Condition, and relieve me; he cares not what becomes of me or my ways. *And my way is bid that he cannot help me, and my judgment is passed from my God:* that is, there is a Sentence of Death past on me, there is no escaping; but see how compassionate the Lord speaks, Why dost thou say so, poor Soul! I am not thoughtless and regardless of thee, as thou say'st. v. 28, 29. *Hast thou not known and heard, the everlasting God gives power to the faint, and to them that have no might, increases strength?* Such as are desponding and hopeless in them-

them
that
streng
very

Th
Offer
by C
in hi
gatio
himf
all
God
wher
if h
self
my
Lov
Hap
mak
you
you
do
shal
thin
from
be
I w
I w
I w
wil

themselves, God raises them up : They that wait on the Lord, shall renew their strength ; God in his time will refresh every weary Soul.

III.

The Covenant of Grace is God's free Offer and Promise of Life and Salvation by Christ to all Sinners that shall believe in him. It is a gracious and firm Obligation, in which God doth make over himself, and all his goodness in Christ, to all Believers. It is a great matter for God to be our God in special Covenant ; when he saith, *I will be your God*, it is as if he should have said, I will bestow *myself* upon you : What I am, I am for *thee* ; my Spirit, my Comforts, my Son, my Love, my Goodness, my Assistance, my Happiness, it is *thine* ; my Holiness shall make you holy, my Wisdom shall make you wise, my Righteousness shall make you righteous. Whatsoever a God can do for his People, I will do for you ; you shall have all things needful for you, all things desirable. All that you can expect from a God, expect it from me ; I will be gracious to pass by thy Unworthiness ; I will be merciful to pardon thy Sins ; I will be Holiness to change thy Nature ; I will be Assistance to thee in Duty ; I will be comfort to thee in Trouble ; I

Y 18 *Christian Encouragements*

will be Wisdom to cure thy Folly ; I will be Plenty to thy Wants ; I will be Strength to thy Weakness ; I will give Blessing to your Estates ; I will be Providence as to your Dangers ; I will be Preservation as to your Persons ; I will be Salvation to your Souls ; I will be your Sun and Shield ; I will be your Recompence and exceeding great Reward ; *I will be a God unto you* ; I will be your God, and Guide unto Death, and your Portion for ever. This is for God to be *our God in special Covenant.*

IV.

There may be Faith where there is no Assurance. Remember it ; O my Soul, for thy Comfort, and make a right use of it. Thou may'st be *a true Believer*, tho' thou art but *a weak Believer* ; nay, tho' thou art ready to think thyself *no Believer*. It is one thing to have an Interest in Christ and Salvation, and another to know it. It is possible for many a good Christian to trust in God, and believe in Jesus Christ, and yet in time of Disertion and Temptation, he may not know it. A Soul under the Eclipse of God's Countenance may think himself in a lost Condition, as *David* did, *I said I am cut off from before thine Eyes*, *Plal. 31. 22.* but it was not

not so, for God then heard the Voice of his Supplication. A man may truly fear the Lord, and obey the Voice of his Servants, and yet *may walk in Darknes and see no Light*, Isa. 50. 10. *Sion said, the Lord hath forsaken me, my God hath forgotten me*, Isa. 49. 14. but it was not so. There may be Faith of *Adherence*, where there is not Faith of *Evidence*. The Soul may cleave fast to Christ, and say, “ *If I perish, I will perish at thy Foot, hoping, waiting, trusting ; tho’ thou killest me, yet I will trust in thee ; tho’ I know not whether thou lovest me, yet I will endeavour to love thee*”. There may be Faith without Assurance, otherways true justifying Faith may be *lost* ; for Assurance is with some quite *lost*, at least for a time ; but true Faith cannot be lost ; it may decay, but not fail. *I have prayed for thee that thy Faith fail not*, saith Christ to Peter : This Prayer he makes for all Believers. They also that have some Assurance of their Salvation, have it not in the same measure.

There may be a good measure of Assurance, tho’ not full Assurance. There is a *probable Assurance*, I mean when a Christian, comparing his Heart and Life with the Example of Christ, and Rule of the Words, finds, that tho’ he hath some reason

120 *Christian Encouragements*

to fear lest he should be an *Hypocrite*, yet he sees more cause to hope than to fear, When after he hath searched himself, made an impartial Trial of himself, he comes to this Conclusion : Tho' I am not as confident I shall go to Heaven, as I am that there is a Heaven ; yet I bless God, I see more ground to hope that my Sins are pardoned, and that I am in a state of Salvation, than to fear it is otherwise. When I reason the Case with my Soul, I have more Arguments *for me*, than *against me*, and can say, if I die this moment, it is not only possible, but *probable* that I should be saved ; this I call a *probable Assurance*. There may be *Doubts* and *Fears*, where there is *this Assurance*, because Doubts and Fears do not always proceed from the Weakness of Grace, but sometimes from the Strength of *Temptation*. A Man that hath but a *weak Faith*, if he meet with *no Temptation*, shall scarce know what *doubting* means, and a Man of a *strong Faith*, under *strong Temptations*, may not be able to overcome *Fears* and *Doubts*. If *Assurance* did exclude all Doubts and Fears, then it should be *perfect* ; but as our Faith and all other Graces are imperfect, so is Assurance also.

None have Assurance at all times, it is like the Weather, sometimes fair, some-
times

times foul ; yea, in the same Day fair in the Morning, and cloudy before Night. *David* had such strong Faith at one time, that he would not fear, tho' ten thousand set themselves against him ; he would not fear, tho' he should pass thro' the Valley of the shadow of Death : At another time he was so full of Fear, that he saith he shall *one Day perish by the Hands of Saul.*

V.

We can never have too high, too vast Thoughts of the Goodness of God ; we do not think aright of God, if we do not think him more ready to give, than we are to ask. There is nothing thou canst go to God, for that is according to his Will, but he is ten thousand times more ready to bestow than thou art to ask. A child of God may go to him with as full Confidence of his Love, as a Child to the most tender Parent in the World ; nay much more abundantly : The blessed Majesty of Heaven is inclin'd to succour and relieve those that are in Distress and Misery. He that puts Bowels of Compassion and Pity into Man, shall not he himself be much more pitiful and compassionate ? *Exod. 34. 6. He is merciful and gracious, he delights in nothing more than in shewing Mercy.*

You

122 *Christian Encouragements*

You can do nothing more grateful to God, nor please him better, than to plead for Mercy, *Mick. 7. 18.* When thou pleadest for Mercy, thou hast God's Nature pleading the same thing for thee. All the yearning Bowels of the most compassionate Parents in the World are but a meer Shadow to the Bowels of God. We may go to God in Confidence of being heard, for Christ's sake only, as if we had never sinned; 'tis wonderful what the Scripture saith of Faith, and Prayer.

VI.

This also may help to sustain and comfort a poor doubting tender Heart, that fears and suspects himself of Hypocrisie, that those *very Fears* of thine are some shew of the contrary. Men naturally love and flatter themselves, but thou loathest thyself for thy Corruptions. Be of good cheer, 'tis Grace, and nothing but Grace that complains of Sin: 'Tis Sincerity, and nothing else, that discovers and bewails Hypocrisie: Especially when thou bewailest Heart-Hypocrisie, and such secret hidden Sins, that only God and thy own Heart do know. If thou livest not in any known Sin, nor in neglect of any known Duty; if thou wouldest find out thy Sin; if there is no Sin thou wouldest have hid

hid from God's Eye, and no Duty thou wouldst have hid from thy own Eye; if there is no Sin but thy Heart is against it, and no Duty but thy Heart is for it, this proves thy *Uprightness*.

VII.

If God never makes his Face to shine on thee in this World, yet 'tis thy Duty to trust and cleave to him through Christ. Would you know why God when he hath wrought Grace, doth not enable the Soul presently to perceive it? It may be 'tis that *Sin* may be more *bitter*, If we could have Comfort when we would, we should have very slight thoughts of Sin: Upon sight of thy Graces possibly thou wouldst be proud; to hide this Pride, God hides our Graces from us. It may be God doth it to prove thy Obedience to him; for to rely on God's Grace, and live by Faith, without sensible Tokens of it, is the purest Act of Obedience that can be. By Assurance we get more *Comfort* to our selves, but by believing we give more *Glory to God*. Therefore saith Christ to *Thomas*, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*

When you have any Evidences of Grace, you must be sure to rest only on Christ, and trust to him. The great Work of a
Chri-

124 *Christian Encouragements*

Christian in this World is, out of a sense of his Sins and Weaknesses, daily to depend on Christ, looking to Christ, seeing our need of Christ for Pardon, and Sanctification, and Reconciliation every day: This is our great Work. How many search for Grace, and neglect to put forth Acts of Faith on Christ? Alas! Graces are but Tokens from Christ. Let us not forget depending and relying on the blessed Jesus, tho' we have no sight at all of any Grace in ourselves.

Where a Person hath any one sign of Grace, he may warrantably conclude all the rest to be there, tho' at present he perceive them not. 'Tis the truth, and not the measure and degree of your Grace, you are to conclude your State by. The prizing and loving, and seeking, and delighting in the Love and Favour of God above all, is a certain Evidence of Grace.

VIII.

The greatest sense of Sin and Guilt should discourage none from coming to God for Mercy through Christ; because the Mercies of God are infinitely more than a Sinner's Provocations are, or can be. O'tis boundless Mercy! bottomless Mercy! There are many-like Sinners as thou art; but there is *none like God for*
par-

pardon
My t
ways
than
your
thou
awa
God
Arg
ful
If y
be c
like
tend
take
grea
into
The
betw
you
Th
Sin
unt
no
mee
com
to
Ch
Th
the
teo

pardoning and forgiving mercy, Mic. 6. 18.

My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor my ways your ways : As the heaven is higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts, Isa. 55. 8.

When Conscience is awakened, we are ready to doubt whether God will pardon us ; therefore he fetches Arguments from his gracious and merciful Nature. *My ways are not your ways :*

If you repent, your Sins shall infinitely be out-done : We are apt to think God like ourselves ; but the blessed God is of tender Bowels, slow to Wrath, loth to take Vengeance, ready to forgive the greatest Wrong, and receive the Sinner into his Favour upon true *Repentance*.

There is, saith God, as vast a difference between my Disposition and Dealing, and yours, as between *Heaven* and *Earth*.

Thou that art an awakened convinced Sinner, the Promises of the Gospel belong unto me ; *Isa. 61. 1. The Lord hath anointed me, to preach good tidings to the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, and to comfort all that mourn.*

Canst thou desire to be in a better Case, than those whom Christ hath Commission to take care of ?

The Poor in Spirit, the Mourners for their Sins, those that hunger after Righteousness, not having a drop of Comfort
from

126 *Christian Encouragements*

from themselves, Christ bleſſeth and pronounces happy. *Blessed are the poor in Spirit*: Not one of them would the Lord have kept from coming to him, *Mat. 11. 28. Come to me, All ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* Trust to me, you that are troubled in Conscience for Sin, I will bring you to rest in God's Love and Favour. Be not discouraged, there is a Mediator for thee, whose Worthiness and Righteousness, is more satisfactory and pleasing unto God, than all the Sinners Wickedness is injurious and displeasing to him. O this is a very sweet and comfortable Consideration indeed! *There is no such Evil in Sin to damn thee, as there is Merit in Christ's Blood to save thee.*

IX.

To despair of Mercy is a greater Sin than all thy other Sins: This makes thee like the Devil himself. It is the Glory of Divine Grace to triumph over all the Sinner's unworthiness. Resolve therefore I will yet follow God, tho' I have offended him; come on me what will, I know *he is God and not Man*, who can help, nay will help, if I come unto him. *Isa. 57. 16. I will not contend for ever, nor be always wroth; for the Spirit would fail before me,*
and

and the Souls that I have made. Isa. 41.

17. *When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst; I the Lord will bear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.* When it comes to failing, fainting, sinking, dying, then comes help. Be much in Prayer, and hold on waiting; God may make you seek and wait a long time; aye, but he will certainly come, and that will make amends for all.

X.

How shall one be willing to die, that hath not a sense of God's Love to God, tho' we cannot see God's Love to us. What are the Actions of our Souls towards God, when we can see no Love in his Dispensations towards us? As that good Man under great Afflictions, and Dissatisfaction about the Love of God, at last breaks out, *If I did not love God, why do I follow him, and mourn after him?* If thou lovest God, here is ground of Comfort; thou couldst not love God, if he did not first love thee. It was a memorable Answer of Mr. Dod, a godly Minister, that said to him a little before his Death, What will you say to me, who am going out of the World, and can find no Comfort? He replied,
What

128 *Christian Encouragements*

What will you say to *our Saviour*, that was going out of the World and found no Comfort? but he cried out, *My God, my God* still. This Speech much refreshed that godly Minister. Others of God's Children have wanted sensible Comfort at their Death, yet they have been able to act Faith, and to say, *My God, my God* still. Tho' God's *sensible Presence* is not still *the same*, yet *his Word and Promise* is; he speaks as comfortably in his Word as ever, he cannot deny his own Word. God sometimes withdraws Comfort, that we may prize his Word more, and depend more upon that: You please and honour God most, when you can venture your Souls on his bare Word and Promise. A Faith of Recumbency on Christ in the want of Comfort, doth more honour God than the highest Faith of Assurance.

Why should *Death* be a Terror to 'em that fear God? none need to fear Death, that are escaped from the Dominion of Sin and the Devil. Can you say you do not love Christ, and that you do love Sin? then there is cause enough for fear; but this were to bely the blessed Spirit. *The godly hath hope in his Death*: A hope of Life, even at the Point of Death. A godly Man's hope can never fail him, he may want sensible Comfort, but he doth *hope* still.

still. I shall a his G weary going a stain of De ror in Man more his L shall rates separ from unto still t Saint

Pf in the merc when hope that thinl them sciou pleas he v

still. Death, 'tis a going to God ; and shall a godly Man be afraid of going to his God ? Again, it is a Sleep, a Rest ; are weary Men afraid of their Rest, and of going to sleep ? If Death be an Enemy, 'tis a slain Enemy ; Christ hath been the Death of Death : And why should that have Terror in it, that hath no Life in it ? A godly Man is a real Gainer by Death : He gains more by his Death, than ever he got all his Life long, viz. Happiness and Joy that shall never end. Again ; tho' Death separates Relations here, yet Death can never separate the godly Man's Soul and Body from Christ : Both still continue united unto Christ. They sleep in Jesus, God is still their God, and therefore let not the Saints of God be afraid of Death.

XI.

Psal. 147. 11. *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy :* Then our Prayers please God, when they are put up to him in Faith and hope of his Mercy. Poor trembling Souls that meditate nothing but Terror, little think how it would please God, to see them to hope in his Mercy. They are conscious to themselves how they have displeased God ; but hope in God's Mercy, and he will take pleasure in thee. They bring
most

most Honour to God that are most admiring and magnifying of his Mercy. His Heart is most set on Mercy, in all the Manifestations of it. Therefore let poor drooping Souls still maintain hope in the Mercy of God through Christ.

XII.

This is certain, in every afflictive Providence to Believers, there is more Mercy than Wrath ; nay, 'tis all Mercy in the Issue, and not in revengeful Wrath, but paternal Anger. They have Supports under all ; sometimes they may be under desertion, and no comforts of God come in to their Souls ; they are ready to say, *Lord, why casteth thou off my Soul !* But then they have this to support them, they can love God and mourn after his Favour ; tho' he seems to be gone from them, they can look after him, and long for his Return ; and this is such an effect of Grace, that is more worth than the whole World. *Sustentation*, saith Mr. Baines, I thank God I have tho' *Suavities* I have none : Sicknes, and Sorrow, and Death that are the Fruits of Sin, none can be exempted from ; but Grace doth this for Believers : The Curse, the Hurt, the Venom of all is taken away ; they are Gainers by all, 2 Cor. 4. 16. *Tho' our outward man, &c.* All works for their

good :

good: Others have Comforts with a Curse, but Believers have Crosses with a Blessing. The Guilt of Sin, the Grace of God in Christ, doth quite take away from all Believers, *Heb. 8. 12.* Pardoning Mercy clears the Soul of Guilt. What Comfort is this to such, that by the Grace of Justification through Christ, are in God's account righteous! And upon the account of Christ their Righteousness, they may come into God's Presence with as assured Welcome, as *Adam* in Paradise, or the *Angels* now in Heaven. This thou may'st be assured of, that Christ will not *break the bruised Reed, nor quench the smoking Flax.* Tho' thy Faith be so small, that it yields not Light to others, nor Heat to thy own Heart, yet Christ discerns and accepts it. But can a Man have the Exercise of Grace, and not know it; fear God, and not discern it? I answer, Yes, some graces may then be acted, and discerned by others, as well as at any other time. He may fear God as truly, and as much as ever, and yet his Grace may not have Light to discover itself to him. It may have a Being, and working in the Heart, when it's not clear in thy Apprehension.

Hearken unto the Voice of God, O poor, doubting, disconsolate Sinner! Why dost thou pass Sentence against thyself? Thou say'st, O my Sins are very many! Well, but the mercies of God are far more. O but my Sins are very great! True, but the Mercies of God are far greater. O but my Sins are of long continuance! True, but yet thy Sins are but Sins of Time, his Mercies are the Mercies of Eternity. O but my Sins are greater than you are aware of, they are Crimson, Scarlet Sins! How great are they? Are they as great as the Sins of *Manasseh*, that was a Wizard, that filled *Jerusalem* with Blood, yet God pardoned him? Are they greater than the Sins of *Mary Magdalen*, out of whom were cast seven Devils, and yet God had Mercy for her? O but I fear the Stock of Mercy is quite spent! No his Mercy endures for ever, it is from everlasting to everlasting. But I have exceedingly abused Mercy; yet remember, that tho' thou hast sinn'd against his Mercy, yet thou hast not sinned above his Mercy; *Isa. 55. 8. My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor my ways as your ways; as the heavens are above the earth, so are my thoughts above your thoughts, and my ways above your ways.* 24 MA 66

or,
oft
ou
out
out
the
out
ue,
his
O
are
ow
the
nat
ar-
the
ere
cy
cy
for
g.
ret
t
re
not
s;
re
ny